







AN EXAMINATION
OF THE
SYSTEM OF NEW DIVINITY;
OR
NEW SCHOOL THEOLOGY.

BY REV. FRANCIS HODGSON,
" "
OF THE NEW-YORK CONFERENCE.

"It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—JUDE, ver. 3.

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there* is no light in them."—ISAIAH viii. 20.

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PREFACE

TO

NEW DIVINITY.

To the subjects of the following pages, the author has devoted much careful reading and patient investigation. Observing, some years since, that there was an exciting controversy in the leading Calvinistic denominations, he was anxious to know what doctrinal changes were taking place. It was reported that some of their eminent preachers had renounced Calvinism, and embraced Arminianism. Although he never had any confidence in this report, yet it served to stimulate inquiry. While eagerly seeking for information, and not knowing how to obtain it, on account of his remoteness from the scene of disputation, he accidentally met with several numbers of the *PHILADELPHIAN*, a paper published by the Rev. Dr. Ely. They contained the sermon of the Rev. Albert Barnes, on "The Way of Salvation;" the protest against the leave granted by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, to the First Presbyterian Church, to prosecute a call for Mr. B. to become their pastor; Mr. B.'s answer to the protest, with several other articles on both sides of the controversy. This was a timely and important acquisition. The subject was now fairly laid open to him—the mystery explained. From that time he felt an increasing interest in the subject, and carefully treasured up whatever information he received, respecting the doctrines of the New School party.

Meantime, public attention was called to the unscriptural character and dangerous tendency of some of the New School doctrines, by correspondents of the *Christian Advocate and Journal*. The keen and well-directed strictures of a writer over the signature of "More Anon," in reply to

a series of assaults on Methodism, and the very seasonable appearance of the able articles on the "Calvinistic Controversy," by the late and lamented Dr. Fisk, served to increase inquiry, and diffuse information.

Notwithstanding what had been written, it appeared that something more was needed, namely, an exhibition of the New School doctrines in their relations as a system. Many of these doctrines are brought out prominently, and are triumphantly refuted by Dr. Fisk; but his work relates to the Calvinistic controversy in *general*, rather than to New Divinity as a system. Prompted by these considerations, a series of numbers was commenced, in the Christian Advocate and Journal. The design was to supply this apparent deficiency—to present, without entering largely into the argument, an outline of this novel theology as a system, and especially to aid in correcting the impression that it is identical with Methodism. It was thought that a few brief articles would accomplish this purpose, but as the writer proceeded, the magnitude of the work increased. He was apprehensive that it would be difficult, without very strong proof, to convince many who are sincere inquirers, that certain doctrines are held by those to whom they are imputed. It was also supposed that it would be unsatisfactory, if not unjust, to rely on a single passage to prove a doctrine held by one individual, and much more so, by a large class of theologians. Hence he was led, not only to quote a number of authors, but also to multiply quotations from the same authors. Many of the quotations were found to contain not only the doctrine, but likewise arguments in support of it, so blended with the statement as to render them inseparable. This imposed a necessity of going more extensively into the argument than was at first designed. Thus the articles extended to more than thirty in number, and some of them were quite long.

These numbers were not considered wholly unsuccessful, and the author has been solicited, by private communications, and resolutions of several Annual Conferences, to publish them in a volume.

The author finds it difficult to preclude the conviction that the providence of God has been propitious to this undertaking. Be this as it may, he cannot but think it remarkable that, while in situations where the study of this controversy could have no immediate bearing on his ministerial labours, he could not be satisfied to lay it aside. It continued to interest his feelings more and more ; when very unexpectedly, he was removed to this city, and placed in stations which furnished, for the time, the most favourable situation for pursuing the inquiry—affording, among other advantages, access to books and periodicals which were previously unknown to him, or beyond his reach.

In the course of an extensive, and as careful a revision as numerous and pressing duties would allow, considerable changes have been made in the arrangement of the topics and arguments. This circumstance, in addition to the fact that much new matter has been added, has induced the author to name the divisions of the book *chapters*, instead of *numbers*.

While the writer cannot but hope that the work will be of service to the cause of truth and holiness, he has no doubt that it contains imperfections ; but he trusts that the importance of the subjects will divert attention from whatever defects may appear.

Is an apology deemed necessary for entering the arena of religious controversy ? The writer is free to confess that he has no ambition to be numbered among those whose superabundant charity would suffer the truth to fall in the streets, rather than buckle on the harness in its defence ; or with those who profess a freedom from sectarianism which they fail to exemplify.

With sincere prayers for the blessing of God on his labours, and on the persons and interests of those whose doctrines he has reviewed, he now commits this work to the public.

F. HODGSON.

New-York, May 16, 1839.

Resolutions of the Michigan Annual Conference.

Resolved, That we highly approve of the articles on New Divinity, now being published in the Christian Advocate and Journal, and deem them well calculated to counteract the progress of error; and that the author be respectfully requested to finish the subject as soon as possible, and to submit the same for publication in book form.

Resolved, That the Agents be respectfully requested to publish, in book form, the articles on New Divinity, over the signature of F. H., in case the author shall comply with the above resolution; believing, as we do, that such a work is very much needed, and will, by God's blessing, prove an effectual antidote against a dangerous error prevailing in our country.

Resolution of the Georgia Annual Conference.

Resolved, That the Book Agents at New-York be requested to publish the pieces of F. H. in book form.

Resolution of the New-Jersey Annual Conference.

Whereas, a correspondent of the Christian Advocate and Journal, under the signature of F. H., has furnished a series of numbers on New Divinity, in which, with distinguished ability, the errors of that system are exposed and refuted; and whereas we believe their extensive circulation, in a revised and durable form, will subserve the interests of truth :—

Therefore, *Resolved*, That this Conference respectfully request their republication by our Book Agents at New-York, pledging our influence to give the work a widely extended circulation.

NEW DIVINITY.

CHAPTER I.

ABILITY.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that has been said and written on the subject of New Divinity within the last few years, the question is frequently asked, and it is one of increasing interest, "What are the peculiar tenets of the New School party?" There is considerable anxiety to know wherein they differ from those which are held by the Old School party, and also, wherein they differ from Methodism. Some are of the opinion, that the difference between the advocates of the Old and New School theories is trivial—that they are engaged in a war of words. Others suppose that they are completely antipodes to each other: that the New School theologians have wholly discarded the leading tenets of Calvinism, as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and other creeds of kindred sentiment; and adopted, with very few and almost unnoticeable exceptions, the doctrines of the Methodists.

It is of the utmost importance to the cause of truth that the latter impression be corrected and obviated. Methodism and New School Calvinism have no affinities for each other. There is, decidedly, less agreement between them than there is between Methodism and Old School Calvinism; and yet it cannot be denied that the manner of preaching of New School divines, especially during times of religious excitement, and where the influence of Me-

thodism is not inconsiderable, is strongly calculated to originate and confirm that supposition.

They assert, that every man is free to choose life or death,—that all may be saved, *if they will*,—that God sincerely offers salvation to all men,—that all men have an ability to comply with the terms of the gospel,—and that every man determines his own final doom. These propositions are invested with all the importance of leading and fundamental doctrines. They often constitute the main topics of sermons, and essays, and exhortations, and are maintained with elaborate argument, and enforced by powerful persuasion.

It is not uncommon for these preachers to assail the opposite notions, and belabour them without mercy ; sometimes greatly to the offence of the more orthodox members and ministers of their own denomination.

Whether they intend to produce the belief that they hold the doctrines of Methodism, in opposition to those of Calvinism, or not, it is very extensively produced. And one thing is certain, that very little pains, if any, are taken by them, to remove it when it exists, or to prevent it when it is likely to take place.

What, then, is the true state of the case ? It is this :—The New School Calvinists hold as tenaciously as do those of the Old School, the leading distinctive tenets of Calvinism, as exhibited in its standards. That “God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass ;” that “by the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death ;” that “these angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed ; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.” They

are equally pledged and concerned for the maintenance of them ; and there is reason to believe that they are equally anxious for their universal prevalence.

It is true, they do not usually assert these doctrines in public. They do not exhibit them plainly and distinctively in their sermons. They are considered unprofitable topics for sermonizing, and laid aside, under the pretext that preaching should be practical rather than doctrinal ; that preachers should be satisfied with exhibiting the great facts of Christianity ; that the world is to be converted by preaching, not sectarian, but substantial Christianity ; just as if the great Head of the Church had revealed and attested great and fundamental doctrines, which his ministers are authorized to label with the odious inscription, "*sectarian* Christianity," and keep out of sight in their preaching, as unprofitable or pernicious. They are reserved to be inculcated in Bible-classes, at the fire-side, and in occasional discourses, when it becomes necessary to offer up a sacrifice on the altar of a jealous or offended orthodoxy.

The New School men, however, have not been peculiar in studiously keeping those doctrines out of sight in their public ministrations. This has, for years, been the common policy. They have continued to constitute the basis of the discourses delivered from Calvinistic pulpits ; but have been so expressed, or implied, as generally to escape the detection of the inexperienced observer. Some preachers, of this class, have succeeded so admirably in this work of concealment, that many of their hearers, and members of their churches, are offended and indignant when it is alleged that they hold Calvinistic doctrines.

The peculiarities of New School Calvinism, then, are not to be found in a denial of those articles by which the creeds of the Calvinistic churches are distinguished, and an adoption of the tenets of Methodism, but in one of the

metaphysical theories, by which it is attempted to reconcile the well-known doctrines of Calvinism with the offers of a free salvation, and the obligation of all men to repent and believe the gospel. It has been extensively discovered, that the doctrines of a free salvation are the only doctrines which secure revivals of religion. Calvinistic theologians have found, that while they were engaged in opposing these doctrines, as preached by the Methodists and others, as anti-scriptural, tending to universalism and infidelity, and entirely subversive of the doctrines of grace and the plan of salvation, God was rendering the doctrines which they opposed instrumental in the conversion of many souls, and, in some instances, of almost whole neighbourhoods. They likewise discovered a desperate revolting of the public mind against the exclusive doctrines which they attempted to force on its acceptance. This attitude of revolt, notwithstanding they very self-complacently attributed it to the opposition of unregenerate nature to the truth, they found very difficult to withstand; and the only alternative that presented itself was that of adopting and preaching the doctrines of a free salvation. This must be done, or infidelity and irreligion on the one hand, or an equally abhorred Arminianism, *alias Methodism*, on the other, will take the field.

But here arises a difficulty of no small magnitude. The doctrines that salvation is free for all; that it is sincerely offered to all; and that all may accept it; are directly and obviously at war with the doctrines that “by the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death;” “that these angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished;” “that the elect, and none other,

are redeemed by Christ." They have occupied the field against each other in determined and protracted hostility. The latter doctrines these divines were not prepared to surrender. They firmly believed them, and were pledged to their support.

What, then, is to be done? An attempt must be made to reduce these conflicting propositions to an agreement. The doctrines of a free salvation must be preached, and yet the opposite doctrines must be retained, and must constitute the standard of orthodoxy. Hence some ground must be sought out on which they can be united. How shall this be accomplished? This has been styled by the late Rev. Robert Hall, "The great question." Its solution has been attempted, and to this attempt we are indebted for the theory which constitutes New School Calvinism.

This theory has its commencement in certain definitions and distinctions on the subject of *ability*. The reason of these definitions and distinctions is as follows:—If men have not power to repent and believe the gospel, it is useless to offer salvation to them, or to enjoin on them repentance and faith; and sinners are in possession of a valid and unanswerable excuse for living in impenitence and unbelief. It must, therefore, be allowed, that all men have ability to perform these exercises and accept salvation. But, if this be granted without some qualification, what becomes of the doctrine of the eternal and unchangeable foreordination of every event that comes to pass? Will it not plainly follow, that men have power to act otherwise than as God ordained from all eternity, and that doctrine be endangered or exploded? What will become of the doctrine that God has elected a certain number of angels and of men to eternal life, and that the number is so definite that it cannot be added to or diminished? Will it not follow that the non-elect may accept the offer of salvation, and be saved, in despite of their non-election, and

thus frustrate the immutable decrees of sovereign and distinguishing grace and wrath ?

The speculations to which we have referred are designed to meet and obviate this difficulty. It is concluded that all men must be supposed to have ability, in *some sense*, to perform what is required of them in order to salvation. And yet, there must be some insuperable difficulty in the way of the reprobate portion of mankind. We are, therefore, notified, that all men have a *natural*, or *physical* ability, but the possession of this is supposed to be compatible with the absence of another *kind of* ability, which is equally indispensable. The distinction of ability into *natural* and *moral* is resorted to, and we are told, that all have the natural, but all have not the moral ability. Or, if the term, "moral ability" be rejected, as it is by some, there is supposed to be a disinclination, which nothing but the special grace of God ever did, or ever can overcome. On the ground of natural ability, they offer salvation to all ; urge on all the obligation to repent and believe the gospel ; and vindicate the justice of the divine government in the condemnation and everlasting punishment of the impenitent. On the ground of the moral inability, or the disinclination which none ever did, or can overcome, without special grace, they erect the entire structure of rigid, old-fashioned Calvinism. No man has the indispensable moral ability, or the will, to repent and believe, unless God gives it to him, and he gives it to whom he pleases : he gives it to none but those who were elected to salvation from all eternity. This doctrine may not always be brought out prominently in their discourses on human ability. It is often placed as a sentinel to guard the *doctrines of grace* from violation, while the doctrine of natural ability is mainly insisted upon.

Some of the advocates of the New Divinity have likewise, for the purpose of reconciling a free salvation with

Calvinism, a distinction on the subject of atonement. It is perceived, at a single glance, that if the atonement be limited—if Christ did not die for all—it is absolutely impossible that all should be saved ; and therefore it is useless to offer salvation to all. On the other hand, if Christ died for all without any reserve or qualification, their doctrine of election is exploded. A distinction is therefore made between the atonement and the application of it—between atonement and redemption.

The atonement, it is said, was made for all, and is equally applicable to all, but its actual application, which is absolutely necessary to salvation, is restricted, by an eternal decree, to the elect. They alone are the objects of *redemption*.

The bearing of this distinction is readily perceived. Put the natural ability and the general atonement together, and you have the ground of their offers of salvation to all, and appeals to the consciences of sinners. Standing on this ground, they can preach as though they had verily renounced Calvinism ; and many of their hearers may go away, gravely and earnestly affirming that there is not the least difference between their preaching and that of the Methodists ; and yet they are decided Calvinists, and view the doctrines of Methodism with abhorrence. They secure their Calvinism by the doctrines of moral inability, and a limited application of the atonement, or a limited redemption.

Whether this distinction is held by all who are classed with the New School party or not, the writer is uncertain. It is not held by all who hold the distinction on ability. The Rev. Dr. Ely, for instance, is a warm advocate for the doctrines of natural ability and moral inability ; and yet he holds the doctrine of limited atonement, as will appear by a reference to the files of the *Philadelphian*. How he reconciles the doctrine, that all may be saved if they will,

with the doctrine that Christ did not die for all, is a somewhat puzzling question.

Perhaps he thinks that if any one for whom Christ has not died has a disposition to be saved, Christ will yet die for him! Or, perhaps, this subject is too profound for Methodist preachers, every one of whom, he some time since affirmed, preaches all he knows to his congregation twice every two years.

CHAPTER II.

ABILITY CONTINUED.

HAVING, in the preceding chapter, referred the New School theory to its source, we shall now proceed to develop it more fully, and attempt its refutation.

The doctrine of the natural ability of fallen and depraved man, to do whatever is required of him by the divine government, leads, by a course of easy and obvious inference, to the doctrines, that all depravity is in the will; that depravity and holiness consist solely in voluntary action; that infants have no moral character; that regeneration consists in a voluntary change of purpose; that the Holy Spirit, in regenerating a sinner, operates by "moral suasion" merely; that the first movement of a sinner toward God—the very first obedient act—constitutes submission, or regeneration; that the sinner converts himself, or changes his own heart; that for a sinner to pray to God before submission, or regeneration, is not only useless but rebellious, and adds to his condemnation; that the sinner has no right to use any of the means of grace, as conducing to his salvation; that painful convictions for sin, and anxiety for the favour of God, are not only unnecessary, but wholly indicative of rebellion, and

render the condition of those who are so exercised worse than before ; and that the convicted sinner is entitled to no sympathy, on account of his distress of mind, inasmuch as he can terminate it, by submission, whenever he pleases.

These consequences, and others which may hereafter be brought to light, have been acknowledged and adopted, and form so many articles in the creed of the thoroughly indoctrinated New School Calvinist. We shall defer the task of proving that these consequences are held as doctrines, by those to whom we ascribe them, and of tracing their logical connection, until we come to take them up separately for refutation. Our first effort will be directed to the investigation of those views of ability on which the fabric is based.

As the scheme of New Divinity is grossly contradictory in itself, and the manner in which its advocates sometimes assert the doctrine of the sinner's dependance on spiritual influence leads many to suppose that the doctrine of a natural ability to repent and believe the gospel is not only not held, but positively denied, it may not be unimportant to prepare our way by adducing a few examples, in confirmation of what we have asserted on this subject.

The Rev. George Duffield, who occupies a prominent position in the ranks of New Divinity, having written a considerable volume in exposition and support of its principles, distinctly avows the doctrine under consideration. "That men are destitute of the *natural ability*, that is, the constitutional capacities requisite to believe and repent, &c., none will explicitly affirm."—*Duffield on Regeneration*, p. 317.

Again :—"Not much less deluding are the system and tactics of those who, fearing to invade the province of the Spirit, are careful to remind the sinner, at every turn, that he is utterly unable, by his own unassisted powers, either

to believe or repent to the saving of his soul. It might as truly be said, that he cannot rise and walk by his own unassisted powers, &c.”—*Ibid.*, 542.

It is thus asserted by the Rev. Albert Barnes, of Philadelphia, in his Sermon on “The Way of Salvation:”—“In the representation of this scheme, I proceed to remark, in the third place, that while God thus sincerely offers the gospel to men, all mankind, while left to themselves, as sincerely and cordially reject it. It is not to any want of physical strength, that this rejection is owing; for men have power enough in themselves to hate both God and their fellow-men; and it requires *less* physical power to *love* God than to *hate* him.”—*Barnes’ Defence*, p. 24.

In a note to the preceding passage, he remarks, “The distinction, then, between natural and moral ability referred to here is not one of mere speculation. It enters into all preaching; and this single distinction will give a complexion to all a man’s theology, and to all his efforts to save men.”

A comparison of these passages will show that he uses the terms *physical* and *natural* as synonymous, in this application of them, and that he means by natural, or physical ability, that “men have power enough in themselves” to love God. Indeed we are told that it is more difficult to hate God than to love him.

The Rev. Dr. Beecher, after quoting a number of authorities in support of his opinion, says, “I now add:—That the Bible teaches the free agency and *natural ability* of man to obey or disobey.

And on page eighty-four he remarks, “On this argument we observe:—That these implications of the Bible do clearly, and in the strongest possible manner, treat the doctrine of man’s free agency and *natural ability* to obey or disobey the gospel, as the foundation of his obligation.”

It is thus avowed by the Rev. Charles G. Finney:—

“In the light of this subject, you can see the nature and degree of the sinner’s dependance on the Spirit of God. The Spirit’s agency is not needed to give him power, but to overcome his voluntary obstinacy. Some persons seem to suppose that the Spirit is employed to give the sinner *power*—that he is *unable* to obey God without the Spirit’s agency. I am alarmed when I hear such declarations as these ; and were it not that I suppose there is a sense in which a man’s heart may be better than his head, I should feel bound to maintain, that persons holding this sentiment were not Christians at all.”—*Sermons*, p. 24.

The Quarterly Christian Spectator, formerly published at New-Haven, but recently merged in the American Biblical Repository, published in New-York, speaks out explicitly on this subject ; and as this has been the leading periodical in the interests of New Divinity, the reader will pardon us if we make one or two extensive quotations from its pages. In an extract from a work entitled “Edson’s Letters to the Conscience,” which is reviewed with approbation, especially that part to which our attention is now called, we have the following sentiments :—

“But it is asked, *can* a sinner repent without the influence of the Holy Spirit ?

“I reply, in answer, that the Spirit is not necessary to give *power* or *capacity* to repent ; but to make the sinner *willing* to repent,—willing *to use* the power he has to be sorry, in actually being sorry. Here, you perceive, that the only difficulty in the way is *obstinacy*,—the sinner *will not* yield to God ; will not come to Christ for life. This is the whole difficulty. It is of precisely the same *nature* with that of the stubborn child, who *will not* be sorry for having voluntarily and wilfully disobeyed his parent. And it may be that he will continue to stand out, until the parent takes some effectual measure to subdue his obstinacy. But still, this does not prove that he *could not* have

yielded before. No new *power* was needed, which he did not before possess. And the fact that the sinner never *will* yield to God, and repent of sin, without the influences of the Holy Spirit, does not touch the question in regard to capacity or power.”—Vol. vii, No. 4, p. 635.

This subject is brought up in a review of “Sprague on Revivals.” In this article, as in several others to which we might refer, not only is the doctrine of natural ability affirmed, but its opposition to the doctrine of Methodism, on this subject, is distinctly recognised:—

“That God should command what man has no power to perform is irreconcilable with all our conceptions of the divine character. *Ability* to do his duty he must possess, either in himself considered, as a moral agent, or in the promised influences of the Holy Spirit, raising his ‘lapsed powers’ to a capacity for obedience. The former of these suppositions is New-England Calvinism, the latter is evangelical Arminianism. We need not say to which party Dr. Sprague belongs. In common with his New-England brethren, he describes the whole difficulty of the sinner as consisting in a ‘settled aversion’ to his duty. But an aversion, we all know, implies no *real* inability, and receives the name only in a *figurative* sense to describe its strength and permanence.”—Vol. v, No. 1, p. 37.

Here we have two theories presented. One is, that man possesses ability to do his duty, *in himself*, as a moral agent; the other, that he has the ability, not in himself, however, but in the promised influence of the Holy Spirit, raising his ‘lapsed powers.’ The former is claimed as New-England Calvinism. The latter is rejected as evangelical Arminianism.

There is a similar passage, but more full and copious, on page 39, in which reference is made to some doctrinal statements of Dr. Griffin, which are considered exceptionable.

“This statement of Dr. Griffin is followed by another, which brings him, as far as we can see, directly on the ground of evangelical Arminianism. ‘They (sinners) are bound to go forth to their work at once, *but they are not bound to go alone*: it is their *duty* to cast themselves instantly on the Holy Ghost, and not take a single step in their own strength.—*App.* p. 161. Now it is not possible, we apprehend, to invent a statement more directly contradictory than this, to the fundamental principle of New-England Calvinism. That principle is, that man is, *in himself*, a free agent, and not made such by the influence of the Spirit: that he is bound, as a free agent, to ‘go forth at once to the work’ of obeying God, in the exercise of power conferred in creation, and not superinduced by grace, that is, to go ‘ALONE:’ that as a complete moral agent in *himself* considered, he is bound to obey God in his ‘*own strength*,’ this being made in the law the very measure of his obedience: that there is no promise, grant, or ‘privilege’ belonging to the unconverted, and no ‘duty’ which they can perform short of giving their hearts to God; and, therefore, that it is not, as Arminians teach, ‘their privilege and duty to cast themselves on the Holy Ghost’ to be *made* holy, but to *become* holy at once, by the exercise of repentance and faith in Christ. These, undeniably, are the views of all New-England Calvinists, in opposition to the scheme of Evangelical Arminians.”

This passage needs no comment. It asserts strongly that man is able, and bound, to do what is required of him, without the influences of the Holy Spirit; and it as strongly contradicts the opposite opinion.

We beg leave to present another quotation to show how this subject is viewed by the New School Calvinists in England. It is from the pen of John Howard Hinton, A. M., an eminent writer among the Baptists, and contained in a treatise on “The Work of the Holy Spirit in

Conversion." After arguing, at some length, the question of the sinner's ability, he announces, in italics, the following conclusion: "*The means of repentance, therefore, and all the means of repentance, are possessed by a sinner without the Spirit; but the possession of the means of repentance constitutes the power of repentance; therefore, a sinner has power to repent without the Spirit.*"—Page 126.

Were we to adduce all the testimonies on this point that are within our reach, they would fill a volume; but the foregoing are sufficient.

It is not designed to make the impression that the New School party are alone in asserting, and maintaining, this doctrine of natural ability. It was maintained by the distinguished President Edwards, who is almost canonized as a theologian, by the Old School party, and also by Owen, Witherspoon, and others, who are counted among the princes of Old School theology. These men, in the emergencies to which the arguments of Arminianism subjected them, sowed the wind of doctrine from which the whirlwind has grown, that now shakes and rends the Calvinistic churches.

The question now in dispute is one which must be settled by the authority of the holy Scriptures, and to their arbitration every Christian controversialist will cheerfully appeal and submit. If they give their sanction to the theory we oppose, we shall feel bound to forego our opposition. We turn, therefore, "to the law and the testimony." Do they teach that the sinner has the ability, naturally and independently of grace, to perform, at any moment, those acts of holiness which are necessary to salvation, and that all he wants is the will to do so? Just the contrary. The Apostle Paul says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii, 7. It is here plainly affirmed of the carnal mind, that it *cannot* obey the law of God. The ad-

vocates of New Divinity, however, profess to consider this passage in favour of their theory rather than against it. Mr. Duffield tells us that "when Paul says of the 'carnal mind,' that it 'is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,' he is not speaking of the essential mind, but that mind's exercises, as any Greek scholar will at once perceive: so that, instead of furnishing an objection, this passage is a strong confirmation of that for which we contend." And suppose we admit that he is speaking of the "mind's exercises," and not the "essential mind;" is there no contradiction between the doctrine, that the sinner has a natural ability to subject the exercises of his mind to the law of God, and the apostle's declaration, first of the fact, that the exercises of his mind "are not subject to the law of God," and, secondly, that they cannot be subject to it? What is to hinder their subjection to the law of God, if the "essential mind" can subject them to it at pleasure? Is the apostle's declaration, that the "exercises" of the sinner's mind are not subject to the law of God, and cannot be subject to it, a "strong confirmation" of the doctrine of the sinner's natural ability to subject them to the law whenever he will? Then, verily, the laws of evidence must have undergone some great change, or Mr. Duffield is not very scrupulous as to the nature of the evidence on which he relies.

But whether the apostle affirms that the "essential mind" is carnal, and at enmity with God, or not, it is not difficult to infer that this is the case, from what Mr. Duffield supposes him to affirm. These carnal exercises are put forth by the "essential mind." They are exercises of the mind. But if all the exercises of the "essential mind" are carnal, and enmity against God, what shall we say of the mind which puts forth these exercises? Is it not carnal? To assert that all the exercises of the essential mind are carnal, and enmity against God, and yet that

the mind itself is not carnal, would be just as consistent as to assert, that a man may invariably perform wicked actions, and not be a wicked man. According to this mode of interpretation, when the apostle charges some with being enemies to the cross of Christ, we are not to understand him, that the individuals themselves—the “essential” men and women, are the enemies in question, but merely that their actions are enemies of the cross of Christ. Now, it is of that which is carnal that the apostle predicates, that it “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

Equally adverse to the tenet we oppose, is the declaration of the apostle, “The natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit of God ; *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned,” 1 Cor. ii, 14. The doctrine of this text is, that there are spiritual things, with respect to which the natural man is so situated, that while he remains in that condition, he neither discerns them, nor can discern them. To be able to discern them, he must undergo a great change. He must become a spiritual man.

Similar is the effect of these words of our Lord, “How *can* ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only,” John v, 44. The state of mind, in which the honour which cometh of men is preferred to the honour which cometh from God, is represented as rendering its possessors unable to exercise the faith that is required of them.

An attempt is made to dispose of many of those passages in which the inability of the sinner is asserted, by affirming that the terms *can*, and *cannot*, do not always imply *ability*, and *inability*, but often disinclination, or want of will, merely. That these terms are frequently used figuratively, to signify inconvenience, or strong disinclination, and their correlatives, is undeniable. But in their

literal and proper application, they invariably express the idea of power. How is the idea of inability to be more strongly expressed than by the following passages:—"Can we go on hot coals and not be burnt?" Prov. vi, 28. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord," Jer. xxiii, 24. "Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh," James iii, 12. To infer that this language does not import inability, when applied to other subjects, merely because the term *can*, and its correlative, are sometimes used figuratively to signify something else than ability and inability, is to reason as soundly as the Universalist does, when he contends that the term "hell" does not represent a place of future and eternal punishment, because it is also used to signify the grave, or the place of departed spirits. And yet our opponents seem to think that they have fairly disposed of these texts, by saying that the terms under consideration do not always convey the idea of power. But who needs that information? Let them prove that these terms, in the texts we have adduced, or may adduce, are intended to express willingness or unwillingness merely, and we will give them up. Nor will it answer for them to interpret the texts by their theory—to say that they cannot mean inability because it is contrary to the nature of things; for that is the very point in dispute. Whether their views of the nature of things are correct, is to be determined by the authority of Scripture, and will depend on their agreement with its dictates. And when they choose to affirm that man has a natural ability to do that which the Scriptures as plainly affirm he cannot do, whose authority, as to the nature of things, is to be decisive?

We do not rely on these Scripture testimonies, as covering the whole ground in dispute. They directly contradict the doctrine, that the sinner has a natural ability,

at any moment, to do whatever may be required of him in order to salvation. They instruct us that the performance of many of these things requires a state of mind directly opposite to that by which he is characterized; so that, while he remains in his present state of mind, he can no more perform the exercises of holiness than he can see from the depths of the valley the objects that can be seen only from the summit of the mountain. But then, we readily admit that they determine nothing as to his ability to bring about a change in the state of his mind. If it be affirmed that he has a natural ability to enter upon, and go through with, that process which will bring him into another state of mind, and to uphold himself in that condition, we do not depend on these texts to prove the contrary.

The Scriptures, however, do not desert us at this interesting point in our inquiries. They furnish the most explicit avowals on the subject. Our Saviour spoke decisively when he said, "*No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him,*" John vi, 44. There can be no question as to what is meant by coming to Christ. For the *power* to do this, we are declared to be dependant on divine influence. Mr. Barnes endeavours to shield his theory from the stroke which this passage inflicts, by the old standing contrivance of insisting that the phraseology employed does not always signify inability. He tells us that the Saviour did not intend to assert any thing as to the *ability* of the sinner, but merely that, as a historical fact, "*No man ever did or will repent, except as influenced by the Spirit.*"—*Defence*, p. 158. But where is the proof of this? The interpretation of Mr. Barnes is perfectly gratuitous. It is suggested solely by his theory. The inability of the sinner to come to Christ, without aid, could not be more strongly affirmed.

Mr. Hinton endeavours to evade the force of this text by

commenting on the word "draw." "*Drawing*," he says, "is a process not any way adapted to the need of a man who has *no power*; it pertains rather to one who wants inclination."—Page 226. We are at a loss to determine what idea Mr. Hinton attaches to the term "draw." To our mind it does not determine *specifically* the *mode* of the influence used which is exerted. Besides, it is not used with reference to one who has "*no power*," but who has not power to *come to Christ*. Because a man cannot do every thing, it does not follow that he cannot do any thing. And since the Saviour has plainly assured us of the inability of the sinner to come to him, without the Spirit's influence, we care not to dispute about the propriety of the term he has selected to represent the influence which is necessary.

But our interpretation of this passage is abundantly confirmed by other passages. Our Lord on another occasion said to his disciples, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing," John v, 4, 5. In this text the *ability* to "bear fruit," or obey God, is made to depend on abiding in Christ, and the influence which that union secures, just as much as the fruitfulness of the branch depends on its connection with the vine, and the influence which the vine imparts. It is therefore directly at variance with the doctrine of New Divinity on this subject. Will it be pretended that the words *can* and *cannot*, do not, in this instance, refer to power? Then it is impossible to place them in any connection which will give them, determinately, that meaning. The bearing which this text has on the point in controversy, is not affected, in the least, by the consideration that it respects the ability

of the *Christian* to perform the duties of holiness. For if the regenerate man cannot bear the fruits of holiness of himself—if his ability to do this depends on his spiritual connection with Christ—it would be absurd enough to imagine that the unregenerate man is, of himself, competent to the task.

The declaration, “Without me ye can do nothing,” is supposed, by Mr. Duffield, to refer to that divine energy by which we are upheld in being, and in the exercise of our faculties, and not to the additional gracious influences necessary to holiness. It is important to ascertain what is the mind of the Spirit, in any inspired communication, but it is a matter of perfect indifference to our argument whether we adopt Mr. Duffield’s interpretation or not. Supposing it to be correct, the Saviour enforces his exhortation to abide in him by two considerations. One, is the necessity of abiding in him, in order to be *able* to bring forth fruit. The other, is the fact that we are also dependant on him, who claims our services, for the continuance of our lives.

The doctrine of a natural ability, to repent and believe the gospel, is pointedly contradicted by the following words: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil,” Jer. xiii, 23. This is felt by the advocates of that doctrine to be an important passage. Mr. Hinton makes a resolute, yet ineffectual effort to carry his theory over the difficulty it interposes. He lays down the following rule for the interpretation of metaphorical passages: “*We have only to notice the features in which the objects compared agree or disagree: in those in which they agree, the ordinary import which is now metaphorically used will apply; in those in which they do not agree, its application is not to be attempted.*” To this rule we have no objection, but it fails to render Mr. Hinton any service

in this instance. He proceeds to its application, and we ask the attention of the reader to the process. He first decides, authoritatively, that there is no agreement between the objects compared, namely, the sinner, and the Ethiopian, and leopard, with respect to *power*, and then his rule requires that he should look elsewhere for the point of agreement. Accordingly, after having assured us that "It is evident that there is no similarity in the two cases in respect of *capability of change*, and on this point therefore nothing can be learnt from the comparison," he decides that, "the aspect in which the cases are similar is the *actual nonproduction of the result, and the certainty that it will not be produced.*" But we would suggest to Mr. Hinton that there is a difference of opinion, as to whether the objects may be compared in respect to "capability of change." This is the very point in question. Nor can we consent that it shall be settled in so summary a manner. We have appealed from the philosophy of New Divinity, and brought the question to be settled by the authority of inspiration, and have found a text expressly designed to assert the similarity which Mr. Hinton denies. It teaches, in plain terms, that the wicked man can no more make himself a good man than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots. But the advocates of New Divinity seem determined that the Scriptures shall give us no information on this subject, but such as accords with their theory. If Christ himself declares, in plain, literal terms, that *no man can* come unto him, without divine influence, they tell us that he means nothing more than that no man *will* come unto him without such influence; that he says nothing about the *power*. If he assures us that it is *impossible* for men, unaided, to repent and believe, Mr. Hinton says that, "when the matter comes to be examined, it will be found that, with whatever force we may use the terms *cannot* and *impossible*, we do

not mean that we are destitute of *power*." This therefore is no proof of inability. If, to make the matter still more definite, comparisons are instituted, and the word of inspiration assures us that the sinner can no more do, without divine assistance, what is required of him, than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, or the branch bear fruit of itself, separated from the vine, these theorists insist that there is no similarity between the objects compared in respect to ability; that the sinner is able, without the Spirit's influences, to do whatever God demands of him; that the comparison must refer to something else than ability, and therefore "indicates nothing respecting the sinner's ability." Such criticism sets all authority on the subject at defiance.

It is universally understood that the term *cannot* is frequently used to signify strong disinclination; but it is doubtful whether it is used to state, as a matter of fact merely, that an event *will not* take place. When we say of a friend, that he *cannot* go to a certain place at a certain time, we have reference to an impediment in some form. We mean that there is an insuperable hinderance to his going, or that it is very inconvenient for him to go, or that he is strongly disinclined to go. We do not use the term *cannot* to signify merely that, as a matter of fact, he will not go. Mr. Hinton, therefore, takes a greater liberty with the text than appears at the first glance. He not only decides, without any evidence, that the word *can* is used in this instance figuratively, but gives it a meaning that it never bears. However, he does not abide by any one interpretation. He tells us, in the same paragraph, that the metaphor "does nothing more than express emphatically the *fixedness of a sinner's determination*." It appears, then, that it does something more than state the fact that the change will not be produced. It specifies the cause of that fact,—the fixedness of a sinner's deter-

mination. Are we to understand, then, that this is the point of agreement? The Ethiopian may, possibly, have a fixed determination not to change his skin. The leopard may have obstinately made up his mind not to change his spots. But the text gives us no information to this effect. It tells us, in plain terms, that they *cannot* do these things, and definitely specifies the inability as the point of similitude.

The following passage also bears decisively on the subject of controversy: "Verily, I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible," Matt. xix, 23-26.

In these words the Saviour, in the first instance, instructs his disciples that the difficulty of entering the kingdom of God is increased by the circumstances in which riches place their possessors. He then goes further, and asserts an impossibility in the case. This he does by a very strong comparison—"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." That he meant to affirm an impossibility by these words is plain, from the subsequent declaration—"With men it is impossible." The reply of the disciples indicates that they so understood him. It cannot, however, be supposed that this impossibility is created by the possession of riches—that while it is impossible for the rich, it is possible for the poor to enter the kingdom of God. For then, we must conclude, either that no rich men enter the kingdom of God, or that God employs an influence to enable them, which is not necessary in the case of others. If the first supposition

were adopted, it would be contradicted by facts, as recorded in Scripture. If the second, all rich men would be admitted exceptions to the doctrine of a natural ability to repent and believe. The meaning of the Saviour's assertion of impossibility is explained by the declaration, "With *men* it is impossible"—men in *general*—*all* men. It is also sufficiently evident that our Lord did not intend to affirm an absolute impossibility, but merely so far as unaided human power is concerned. "With *men* it is impossible." This impossibility is and must be removed by divine influence. "With God all things are possible."

Will it be objected here that the Saviour restricts the comparison to rich men, and therefore our interpretation involves the absurdity that there are degrees of impossibility—that it is more impossible for a rich than for a poor man? We reply that he did not intend to restrict it to rich men. When the disciples, astonished at his words, asked who then could be saved, he confirmed the impression produced, by applying the declaration to men in general. He applied it to rich men in the first instance, because he was speaking of rich men. He may also have had some special design in giving the general principle this particular application. Besides, if we were to adopt the principle of interpretation which New Divinity prefers, and understand the words as teaching, merely, that a camel *will* sooner go through the eye of a needle than a rich man *will* enter the kingdom of God without divine influence, nothing would be gained, for they understand this to be equally true of all men, and are therefore as much exposed to the objection as their opponents.

Perhaps it may be objected, that, allowing that there is an impossibility affecting all men in this matter, it is absurd to talk of the difficulty being greater in the case of the rich than of the poor. But the objection would not be valid. For, when grace has removed the impossibility,

there may be various degrees of difficulty, according to the habits of men, and the circumstances in which they are placed.

The doctrine of the text under consideration is, that it is impossible for men, rich or poor, to do, without divine influence, what is necessary to their entering the kingdom of God; that, when the impossibility is thus removed, the performance of the exercises required may still be attended with difficulty, which may be increased or diminished by circumstances; and that the possession of riches constitutes a great difficulty, so that a rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of God.

The attention of the reader is now asked to a third class of Scriptures, bearing still more decisively, if possible, on the point in question. The apostle, in the epistle to the Galatians, uses this language: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye CANNOT do the things that ye would," v, 17. Had the apostle foreseen the heresy we are combating, and designed to record his decision against it, he could not have used language more expressive of his design. He not only uses terms which convey the idea of inability, but expressly cuts off the pretence that the difficulty is solely a want of will. He asserts inability to do that to which the will is favourable. An attempt to conform this text to the New School theory would make it say, Ye would not do the things that ye would.

There is a parallel passage in the epistle to the Romans:—"For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that it is good. Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me: for I know that in

me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not; for the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man! But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Chap. vii, 14, &c.

Here is the most direct and explicit contradiction of the doctrine, that the sinner is subject to no other inability, respecting the law of God, than mere unwillingness, that could possibly be framed.

But the advocates of New Divinity are so accustomed to reconciling contradictions, that they do not readily abandon a favourite theory on account of them. It requires but a flourish of Mr. Duffield's pen to sweep these formidable difficulties aside, and press the scriptures which originate them into his service. On the passage from Galatians he thus comments:—When the English translation makes the same apostle say, 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye *cannot* do the things that *ye would*,' it will be seen by every one acquainted with the original, that the word *cannot* is not used by the apostle himself. He merely states the fact, that those in whom the conflict between the flesh and Spirit is waged, *do not* the things they would."

Admitting the propriety of this criticism, there is nothing gained by it. The doctrine which the text is brought forward to disprove is, that the sole reason why the law of God is not kept, is the want of a will to keep it; that this

is the only obstacle. But, according to Mr. Duffield's own rendering, the will is present, and yet the things that are willed are not done. "Ye *do not* the things that ye *would*." So that we are compelled to assign some other cause for the failure than want of will. The explanation Mr. Duffield gives is, "Such is the activity of the conflict, that a present purpose of will is succeeded and counteracted by another, before it is executed." But in this explanation the author contradicts, first himself, and then the apostle. He grants that there "is a present purpose of will," which, according to his theory of ability, is all that is necessary, and yet admits the failure; thus contradicting himself. He then contradicts the apostle by persisting to assign the want of will as the sole cause of the failure. The "present purpose of will" is so temporary and powerless, that before the things willed have time to be executed, it is absent. It is "succeeded and counteracted" by a purpose of will not to do, which is the reason why the things are not done, whereas the apostle says, "Ye cannot do," or ye do not, "the things that ye would."

The author, however, is not sure of what character the *will* is, of which the apostle speaks; whether it is sinful or holy. He says, "The Greek particle, translated *so that*, sometimes denotes design; and if in this sense it is to be here understood, the apostle's meaning is, that the influence of the Spirit in the believer is vouchsafed to counteract and frustrate his evil inclinations. This we prefer, as being most agreeable to the apostle's assurance, expressed in the previous verse." But this interpretation does not extricate him from his difficulties. It forces upon him a doctrine which, it is to be presumed, he is by no means prepared to adopt—that the believer has not a natural ability to commit sin. He has a will to sin, but the influence of the Spirit is vouchsafed to counteract and frustrate his sinful inclinations, so that he cannot do, or

does not, the things that he would. Now, as there are but two kinds of ability concerned in this matter, according to the statements of Mr. Duffield and his New Divinity associates, and the will is the moral ability, it clearly follows, that whatever prevents, when there is a will, must be a natural inability. This, then, is the position in which our interpreter places himself. The believer wills to perform the works of the flesh. All that he wants is the natural ability. The Spirit is given to "frustrate his sinful inclinations," so that he fails to do what he *wills* to do, which is of course to destroy the natural ability respecting those things. It is to be hoped, for consistency's sake, that Mr. Duffield will not be found among those who hold that no Christian can, or ever could, or ever did, or ever will, live without sin.

But he is not yet satisfied. "If it," the Greek particle, we suppose, "denotes merely the result eventually, nothing more can be inferred from it, than that the influence of the Spirit, which generates a holy inclination, is counteracted by corrupt desires and affections, so that it does not issue in the accomplishment of that to which he was inclined, or which he willed." Nothing more can be inferred from it! Who would wish to infer any more from it? The inference which Mr. Duffield affects to consider so harmless, is death to the doctrine that the want of the will is the only obstacle in the way of keeping the commandments. It states that "the influence of the Spirit generates a holy inclination," and yet the holy inclination "does not issue in the accomplishment of that to which he was inclined, or which he willed," and attributes the failure, not to want of will or inclination, as does the New School doctrine of ability, but to something which Mr. Duffield styles "corrupt desires and affections," and which the apostle styles "the lusts of the flesh," by which the holy inclination or will is frustrated. Does this comport

with the doctrine that every man has a natural ability to keep the law—that all that he wants is the will or moral ability—that when he has the will, he has both the natural and moral ability? Does not this inference plainly imply, that not only must there be the will or inclination, but likewise, that those “corrupt desires and affections,” which are represented as distinct from the will, and which defeat it, must be overcome by the influence of the Holy Spirit? The author professes to be indifferent as to “which, if either, of the two constructions should be exclusively preferred,” as neither view militates against the doctrine he has advanced. He may well be indifferent on this point, not because neither view militates against his doctrine, but because they equally militate against it. His utmost efforts to wrest the text from his opponents, and bribe it to bear testimony in his favour, have been succeeded by the most fatal responses.

Having disposed of this passage in so summary and masterly a style, he proceeds to that from Romans, and affirms that nothing can be inferred from it unfavourable to his views of human ability. Let us compare them. The view of ability which he advocates is, that man has naturally the ability to keep the law, and that nothing is wanted but the will. The apostle says, “For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.” Can nothing be inferred from this language of the apostle unfavourable to the proposition with which it is collated? It must be, then, because they so directly and positively contradict each other, that there is no room for inference in the case. But so far from finding this text in his way, he derives from it, also, “confirmation of the views” he has advanced. It is certainly worth while to inquire how. The process will no doubt be highly instructive to those who have not been

fully initiated into the mysteries of New School criticism. "It is evident," he says, "that the apostle cannot here use the word 'will' to denote a simple volition; for no one ever acts or does any thing without some volition. The word is sometimes used to denote the main and efficient, the leading and controlling purpose; and in this sense we suppose the apostle used it in the context first quoted. His meaning is therefore very plain. If he does not voluntarily and deliberately purpose to do evil, but on the contrary, if it is his fixed and abiding, and studious purpose to do what the law of God requires, it shows that the moral being, the I, whose character was to be estimated by this, its leading feature, did fully approve of the law of God; and that, therefore, of whatever deviations from it he was guilty, they were to be attributed to the influence of sin, which he personifies, and not to the deep and fixed principles of his renovated character. His will, in the main, was right, but it was resisted, counteracted, and oftentimes overpowered by various considerations, of which he did not cordially and deliberately approve, nor of that which they led him to do. Here again we derive a confirmation of the views advanced, from the very objections urged against them." We will venture to examine this triumphant reasoning. The author supposes the apostle to be speaking of his own experience, in this passage. This assumption it is not necessary to call in question in the present argument. According to his explanation, the word "will," denotes the main and efficient, the leading and controlling purpose; and it was the fixed, abiding, and studious purpose of the apostle, to do what the law requires, which, according to the natural ability theory, is all that is necessary to secure its fulfilment; and that the moral being, the I, is to be estimated by this, its leading feature. And yet the apostle did not perform what the law requires. "The deviations" of which he "was

guilty," however, "are not to be attributed to a voluntary and deliberate purpose to do evil." "His will, in the main, was right." They are to be "attributed to the influence of sin, which he personifies." "His will" to do right "was resisted, counteracted, and oftentimes overpowered by various considerations, of which he did not cordially and deliberately approve, nor of that which they led him to do." And this is not only consistent with the doctrine that the apostle had a natural ability to keep the law, and that nothing was necessary to secure obedience but the will, but also a confirmation of the doctrine! Most admirable!! But while we may be almost mute with admiration, we can hardly avoid asking, Was the apostle destitute of the "will," while it was his fixed, abiding, studious, efficient, and controlling purpose to keep the law? And what became of the natural ability, while the "will"—"the *I*"—the "moral being"—"the fixed purpose," &c., was engaged in the unequal and unsuccessful conflict with "the personified influence of sin," and the "various considerations" by "which it was resisted, counteracted, and overpowered?"

There is a feature in Mr. Duffield's explanation of this text which deserves to be more fully developed. It assumes a very modest and retiring aspect in this instance, but old acquaintance leads to a ready recognition. We have looked upon it before now. The apostle he supposes to be speaking of his own experience. The word "will" is sometimes used to denote the main and efficient, the leading and controlling purpose; and in this sense he supposes the apostle used it. It appears, then, that the apostle was alternately under the influence of two purposes—one a purpose to do what the law requires, the other a purpose to do what the law forbids. This, according to the New School doctrine, was the character of the Apostle Paul. He had a natural ability to obey the

law of God, or to disobey it. All that was necessary in either case was the will. He had a fixed, studious, abiding, leading, controlling purpose to obey, and this constituted "the deep and fixed principles of his renovated character." But he had, at the same time, a secondary and inferior purpose to commit sin; and the leading purpose frequently gave way to the inferior purpose; so that when he was inclined to keep the law, he kept it, and when he was inclined to violate it, he violated it. He was inclined to violate the law so frequently, that he was in bondage to the inferior and sinful purpose; and so strong and determined was his inclination to sin, that when the holy inclination, generated by the Spirit of God, the main and controlling purpose, conflicted with the inferior purpose, the inferior purpose overcame, and became of course the "controlling" purpose; and, on retrospecting his course, he was led to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" This is shocking! I would be afraid of being posted for a slanderer, if I were to give such an account of the religious character of the Rev. George Duffield.

The impossibility of conforming this text to the doctrines of New Divinity is made more and more apparent, by each additional effort to that end. Mr. Hinton employs, substantially, the same interpretation with Mr. Duffield. He tells us that "These expressions represent his disposition, or the habitually prevailing state of his heart, which dictated a holy and devoted conduct, and gave this main character to his life. He found, however, 'another law in his members,' an inclination to sin, 'warring against the law of his mind,' and the emotions produced in consequence of this were sometimes strong enough to prevent the fulfilment of his holy and devoted purposes."—Page 264. Here, then, is a prevailing state of the heart, dictating holy and devoted conduct—producing holy and

devoted purposes, and efforts to carry them into effect, and yet the good that is purposed is not executed. Why? Because depravity produces emotions *strong enough* to prevent their fulfilment. And all this is perfectly consistent with the doctrine that every man has a natural ability to do the good that is required of him, and is prevented only by a criminal unwillingness! Indeed, the “whole passage appears” to Mr. Hinton “to be remote from the question of power.” The fact that another is “strong enough” to overcome me, it seems, is no proof that I am not “strong enough” to overcome him. But there is another view of this subject. If depravity is sometimes strong enough, in the estimation of these writers, to overcome and defeat efforts to do good produced by holy purposes, which are dictated and sustained by holy prevalent dispositions, what must be the state of the case when the depraved emotions and inclinations are sustained by a settled and prevailing disposition to sin? Mr. Hinton shall answer this question. He says, in the preceding page, “If the emotions excited should be always in harmony with the existing disposition, *then there would be no possibility of an action in any degree contrary to the disposition itself.*” This is conclusive. It places the unregenerate man in this condition, that unless the Holy Spirit, or some other power, excite emotions at variance with what is known to be the settled disposition of every unregenerate man, there would be *no possibility* of any other than sinful action.

Mr. Barnes also fails to explain this passage without flatly contradicting his theory. On the words, “but how to perform that which is good I find not,” he remarks, “I do not find it in my *power*; or I find strong obstacles, so that I fail of doing it.” He adds, “The obstacles are not natural, but such as arise from long indulgence in sin; the strong native propensity to evil.” This appears to be

designed to leave the impression that his doctrine of natural ability is not contradicted; and we suppose it must appear very plain to Mr. B.'s readers, at least those who are capable of understanding such nice discriminations, that obstacles which arise from a "strong *native propensity*" "are not *natural*."

In perfect harmony with the inspired testimonies which we have cited, and equally at variance with the New School theory of ability, are those prayers for help and strength which are recorded in the Scriptures. The unsuccessful conflict, described in the seventh chapter to the Romans, leads to the affecting appeal, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." How absurd!—yea, worse—how insulting to Jehovah, is this call for deliverance, if the petitioner possesses a natural ability to do all the good that is required of him, and is prevented wholly by a criminal unwillingness!! Who would be surprised if God should answer such a call, from the secret place of his thunder, in terms of blasting rebuke? The apostle writes to the Ephesians:—"For this cause I bow my knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c., that he would grant you, according to the riches of his grace, to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit, in the inner man." For the Colossians, he prays that they might be "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." The Apostle Peter prays thus: "The God of all grace, &c., make you perfect, stablish, *strengthen*, settle you." But why do the apostles pray to God that he would strengthen believers, if every man possesses a natural ability to do whatever is required of him?

To the same conclusion do those passages tend which speak of strength as actually communicated. "Likewise," says Paul, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities."

Again: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Again: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." The Psalmist says, "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." Why is this strength imparted, if all men are naturally able to do what is required of them?

The same consequence results from the declarations which are given respecting the sufficiency of grace. "My grace is sufficient for thee;" "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Why these declarations of the sufficiency of grace, if men are able, without it, to do what God requires of them.

If, then, the Scriptures assure us that the grace of God is absolutely necessary to enable us to do the will of God—if they inform us that the apostles prayed that grace might be imparted for that very purpose—if they inform us that for this very purpose grace is actually communicated—if they emphatically assure us of the sufficiency of grace for that purpose—and if they clearly state that the inability which grace is intended to remove is not unwillingness merely, but an inability which exists after the will is brought over to the side of obedience, and while it is making repeated and desperate efforts to keep the commandments—what stronger evidence can be imagined against the doctrine, that all men have a natural ability to do what is required, as indispensable to salvation? "What need we any further witnesses?"

CHAPTER III.

ABILITY CONTINUED.

UNSCRIPTURAL as is this doctrine, its advocates are elaborate in its defence. We proceed, therefore, to examine the arguments by which they endeavour to sustain it.

¶ Mr. Barnes distinguishes ability into *kinds*, and assumes that he has gained his point when he has shown that man must be supposed to possess *some kind* of ability, or ability in *some sense*. "It is certainly possible," he says, "that a man reading the word *unable* in the confession, may have learned to suppose that it meant all *kinds of inability*."—*Defence*, p. 79. Again: "There are *two kinds* of inability; one arising from the want of physical power, the other from a want of inclination or will."—p. 153. Again: "If Dr. Junkin charges me with error in this," that is, in holding the doctrine of natural ability to repent and believe, "he holds the contrary, that is, 'that unregenerate men are not able to keep the commandments of God; that there is no ability of *any kind* to yield obedience, &c.'"² It is here assumed, evidently, that to deny that man has a natural ability, is to deny that he has *any kind* of ability; and, of course, that to prove that he has a *kind* of ability, is to prove that he has a *natural* ability. In answering this argument we shall not object to the practice of distinguishing ability into kinds. It is based on the common distribution of the faculties of our nature into physical or corporeal, intellectual, and moral. It is supposed that each class of faculties has its own peculiar energy. Hence metaphysicians speak of physical, intellectual, and moral power. From this reasonable classification the distinction of ability into natural and moral derives all its plausibility. But the latter distinction is very

different from the former, and is wholly arbitrary, as will be shown hereafter. It is contrived for theological purposes.

Is it not, however, grossly absurd to pretend that an individual has a natural ability to perform a particular action, or a certain series of actions, merely because he possesses a *kind* of power, while he may be destitute of other kinds, equally indispensable? Does it not require all the kinds of power requisite to the performance of an action, to constitute the ability to perform it? Besides, power may be divided into *degrees* as well as *kinds*; and it takes all the kinds and all the degrees of power, necessary to the performance of an action, to constitute the ability in question. If there be absent any one of the kinds of power which may be requisite, or if there be a defect as to the *degree* of power, the ability to perform the action does not exist. To assert the existence of ability to perform a specific action, in the absence of one or more of the essential constituents of that ability, is as absurd as to assert the existence of a whole in the absence of several of its component parts.

Samson possessed power to sunder the green withs with which the Philistines bound him, and to carry off the ponderous gates of Gaza. Now, admitting that ability is distinguishable into kinds, the ability of Samson must have included all the kinds and degrees of ability, which the performances alluded to necessarily called into action. Had he been destitute of any one of the requisite kinds; or, possessing all the kinds, had he been destitute of the requisite degree, he could not have burst the withs, he could not have upheaved the gates. It is not merely a *kind* of ability that is wanted, but the ability *itself*. The case is plain. I have all the *kinds* of ability that Samson had, namely, physical, intellectual, and moral, and yet I have not ability to perform feats of strength equal to those

which he performed. Why? Simply because I have not the *degree* of power which he had. Were I to publish that I am able to perform achievements equal to those recorded of Samson, and when called upon to give evidence of it, reply, that I have a kind of ability, and all that I want is another kind, equally indispensable, would I not thereby render myself ridiculous? Just as ridiculous do these sage theologians make themselves, when they assert that the sinner has a natural ability to repent and believe the gospel; and is, therefore, under obligation to repent and believe, merely because he possesses a *kind* of ability, while he is yet destitute of another kind, which is essentially requisite.

Take another illustration. An individual in distress solicits your charity. You have the disposition to relieve him, and you have all the intelligence that is necessary; but, in searching your pockets, you find that you have no money. Now, although you have two of the kinds of power which are requisite, moral and intellectual, there is one kind which you have not, and the absence of that, renders you wholly unable. But suppose some one in company with you should insist on your giving money to the individual, or being stigmatized as unfeeling and penurious; and affirm that if you had “no sort of ability” you would be excusable; but having “some kind of ability,” you are fully able, and under a moral obligation, to give him money, although you have not a single cent at your disposal, would you not laugh at the absurdity of his reasoning? Equally absurd is the doctrine that the sinner is able to love God, because he has “a kind of ability,” called natural, or any thing else, while he is destitute of another kind, without which no man ever did, or ever will, or ever can, love God, and which God gives to, and withholds from, whom he pleases. The cases are precisely parallel.

It is also supposed, that a denial of the doctrine of a

natural ability to serve God, is equivalent to the assertion that men are *utterly unable* to do what is required of them. Hence the advocates of that doctrine exhibit in its support, with great satisfaction and triumph, those scriptures and arguments which prove that God does not demand of us what we are absolutely incapable of performing. That great summary of law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind," is brought forward to prove that man has the ability naturally to obey the divine law. The opposite doctrine, we are told, makes God a tyrant. That this and similar texts, and the reasonings founded on them, abundantly disprove the doctrine that man is wholly unable to love and obey God, is undeniable. But they do not prove that he has a *natural* ability to do these things. It is not the case, that denying the doctrine of a natural ability to obey God involves the consequence that we are *totally* unable to obey him. Methodism is equally opposed to the doctrine of the entire inability of man to do any thing toward his salvation, as held by Calvinists of the Old School, and to the doctrine of a natural ability to obey God, as held by those of the New School, and Pelagians generally. These doctrines are equally distant from the truth. We hold that while no man has *naturally* the ability to repent and believe the gospel, the grace of God is vouchsafed to every man to enable him to take the steps necessary to his salvation. When, therefore, our New School brethren suppose that they have established the doctrine by these arguments, they are wholly mistaken. They have only proved man's ability, in opposition to the doctrine of his entire and absolute inability. Whether that ability is natural or not, is a question which remains to be settled. They have not advanced a step toward the proof of it. The searguments they have borrowed from the theology of Methodism; and while they fail to establish their

doctrine of natural ability, they can easily be turned with fatal effect against their doctrine of moral inability.

Another fallacy resorted to, for the purpose of proving the doctrine in dispute, consists in confounding *power* with *powers* or *faculties*, and identifying the question—Does man possess naturally the ability to repent and believe the gospel? with the question—Is he in possession of all the constitutional faculties of our nature? Accordingly, some of their most confident arguments are directed to the object of proving that man has not lost any of his constitutional faculties. Dr. Beecher, in his work entitled “Views in Theology,” written in vindication of his orthodoxy, remarks, “I commence with the subject of free agency, or the natural ability of man, as the foundation of obligation and moral government.” This natural ability he explains to be “the intellectual and moral faculties, which God has given to man commensurate with his requirements;”—“the plenary powers of a free agent.”—p. 67. His reasonings are based on this definition.

He remarks, “That nothing has been subtracted by the fall from the powers of agency requisite to the possibility of obedience, is strongly evident from the fact that no one, by the most careful analysis of the mind, has ever been able to detect and name the fatal deficiency. The motive to make such an exculpatory discovery, and throw off hated obligation and feared punishment, has been powerful as the terrors of eternity, and the effort as constant as the flow of ages, and urged with all that talent, and ingenuity, and learning could apply, and the wisdom from beneath inspire, to establish the excusable impotency of man; and to this day the effort has proved abortive. To appearance, the powers of the mind, and the law of God, and the glorious gospel, and the providence of God, are, as they should be, to render obedience a reasonable service, and impenitence and unbelief without excuse; and

where, amid the constitutional powers of agency, the defect lies, has never been discovered ; what it is has never been told, or that there is any such defect proved.”—P. 31.

Mr. Duffield, in his work on regeneration, says, “ The terms ability and power may denote, either the effective force or energy, or the particular faculty or capacity for exerting that force.” In explaining natural ability he adopts the latter sense ; he explains it to be “ the constitutional capacities requisite to believe and repent.” In this definition it is perceived at once that the words ability and faculties are used as synonymous, and that the “ natural ability” is identified with the constitutional faculties of our nature.

Mr. Barnes, in his reply to that part of the protest against his sermon which relates to the ability of sinners, says, “ The design of these passages was to affirm that salvation was offered to all men—that they were under no compulsory means—no physical force, to ruin them—that they were not under a defect of any natural power of intellect, judgment, or conscience to do this duty—that the duty which God required had been measured by the nature of the human faculties—and that if he went beyond that limit it must be unjust.”—P. 75.

Although Mr. Hinton does not formally define ability to consist in the possession of constitutional faculties, he confounds it with faculties, when it suits his argument. In attempting to prove that the Holy Spirit does not impart additional power in regeneration, he remarks, “ Birth and creation, it will be admitted, do involve the production of new powers. But when these terms are applied to the *conversion of a sinner*, we are immediately met by the fact that the *powers of moral action are already in existence*, namely, his intelligent faculties. *Here is no room therefore for the production of new powers* ; and hence, of ne-

cessity, the analogy and the force of the metaphor *are confined to the production of new action.*”—p. 227.

A striking example of this fallacy is found in a recent English work, entitled “Lectures on Divine Sovereignty, Election, &c., by George Payne, LL. D.” He attempts to refute the doctrine that man is indebted to supernatural influence for his ability to keep the law of God, and complains loudly, that neither the Rev. Richard Watson, in his Theological Institutes, nor Bishop Tomline, defines the term *power*. His “decided impression is, that neither they nor Arminians in general attach any definite meaning to the term. They write as if their conceptions were very loose and indefinite, and yet as if they did not suspect this to be the case.” He tells his readers that “these are not the times when loose and ambiguous statements can be permitted to go unexamined and unsifted.” “I can,” says he, “conceive of two senses only, in which the term power can be used in this connection; if there are more than two, I shall consider myself indebted to any individual who will point them out. The two senses of which only I am at present cognizant are those which have been more than once referred to, namely, disposition and physical capacity. When, therefore, Mr. Watson affirms that man has lost both his will and his power to obey God, the language is, to my apprehension, equivalent with the declaration that he has lost his disposition and physical capacity to obey God.” What Mr. Payne means by physical capacity, as distinguished from will or disposition, will be made manifest as he proceeds. “I now seek for information,” he adds, “whether, in the judgment of the Arminian, Adam did lose his physical capacity to obey his Creator? *Should he reply in the negative*, then I would further inquire, Since the loss was by hypothesis more than disposition, and yet was not physical power, what is that strange *tertium quid* between will and physical power—partaking of

the properties of neither, or rather, perhaps, being an unnatural mixture of both—which completes the amount of his loss? Will any one attempt to explain it? Is it explicable? Can it even be conceived? *Should the reply be in the affirmative*, should it be said that he lost physical power, I would ask whether he lost the whole of his physical powers, or some of them only. Had the former been the case, that is, had he lost sensation, memory, judgment, volition, &c., he must have ceased to be a man; he must have sunk even below a brute. If it be said that he lost some of them only, I ask, which? Was it the understanding, the memory, the judgment, the conscience, &c.? Experience proves they all remain. Degraded as man is, he has suffered no loss of any physical power essential to obedience; for there is nothing which God commands him to do which he could not do if he would." From such reasoning Mr. Payne concludes that man has power to obey the gospel, without supernatural influence, and vauntingly remarks, with reference to his opponents, that "Ten thousand absurdities have been uttered on this subject, by those who have theological words without theological ideas, whose creed is a creed of symbols rather than things."—pp. 76, 77.

It is evident from these passages, that those who deny the doctrine of natural ability to do what God requires as indispensable to salvation, are placed by its advocates in the attitude of denying that fallen man is in possession of all the constitutional faculties of his nature. It is affirmed again and again, in defence of this doctrine, that the moral ability, or regeneration, imparts no new faculty. It is true, they do not always abide by this definition. They do not always use the phrase, natural ability, in this sense. It is frequently used in the popular sense; and on their dexterity in shifting from one sense to another depends the success of the contrivance.

But was ever philosophy, or common sense, more wantonly outraged than by confounding ability to perform a certain act, or series of acts, with constitutional powers or faculties? May not the most active and efficient man in the country, in all the various departments of human enterprise, be so reduced by sickness as to be utterly unable to rise from his bed, or even to speak audibly? But has he lost a constitutional faculty? Is it the business of the physician or the nurse to restore a constitutional faculty? Has he not, in his disabled condition, all the powers or faculties he ever had? And yet, according to these philosophic theologians, he has a natural ability to perform these or any other acts that come within the compass of human ability, because he has all the faculties of a man. This boasted natural ability turns out, therefore, to be no ability at all.

And now let us see if the moral ability, or disposition, will help the invalid out of his difficulty. He has the will. He desires to speak. He makes repeated and resolute efforts to speak and rise from his couch, plainly showing that there is no inability of will—that he possesses the moral as well as the physical ability, and yet he cannot. With all this parade of metaphysical learning and discrimination, the true idea of ability is wholly overlooked. It is fairly excluded by the definitions of both kinds of ability. It does not reside in the natural ability. It does not reside in the moral ability, or disposition. It falls down, between them, into the safer custody of common sense and Methodism.

Look, for a moment, at some of the consequences of this definition of ability! If the possession of all the constitutional faculties of human nature, constitutes ability to perform any given act which a human being may possibly perform, it will follow, inevitably, either that I have power to perform feats of strength equal to those for which Goliath and Samson were celebrated, or that I am deficient in constitutional faculties. It will follow, either that an

infant is able to do all that the most able man can do, or that it is destitute of one or more of the constitutional faculties of our nature.

Again, let us try the application of this definition of ability to the purpose of laying the foundation of moral accountability, and vindicating the divine government in the punishment of the impenitent: for this is one of the important uses assigned it. The possession of the faculties of our nature is supposed to constitute a natural ability, and that is considered as the basis of moral obligation, and sufficient to justify Jehovah in the everlasting punishment of the impenitent and unbelieving. From these premises it is as clearly deducible that infants are naturally able to do all that may be required of full-grown men and women; that they have a natural ability to repent and believe the gospel, and are therefore justly accountable for the performance of these exercises, and justly punishable, and actually liable to punishment, for the nonperformance of them. To deny that infants possess all the constitutional faculties of our nature would imply that these faculties may be acquired by growth or education, which would be the same as to deny that they are constitutional.

We are now prepared to answer Mr. Payne's significant demand for the "*tertium quid*" which he so humorously describes. It is power itself. The very thing which he attempts to define, but entirely overlooks. Whatever may be his success on other occasions, he has, in this instance, signally failed to sustain his lofty pretensions to superior precision. His *arguments* have been directed to prove what every Arminian would cheerfully admit, and what, we presume, no one of any creed would deny; so that he has dealt his giant blows on an imaginary foe. The "theological idea" which he attaches to the term *power*, is foreign to the subject under consideration; and he has yet before him the task of proving that the sinner has *power*,

as the people generally understand the term, to repent and believe, without the assistance of grace.

The advocates of the doctrine of natural ability frequently confound it with the doctrine of *free agency*. This is done by Dr. Beecher. He defines it, as we have seen, to consist in "the plenary powers of a free agent;" and throughout his argument on this subject treats these two questions as identical. "I commence with the subject of free agency, or the natural ability of man, as the foundation of obligation, &c.," is the language with which he opens his defence.—p. 15. Again he says, "There is not a dispute about doctrine, at this time, in the Presbyterian Church, which does not originate in discrepant opinions respecting the created constitutional powers of man as a free agent, and the grounds of moral obligation and personal accountability." Again: "Nothing is apparent in the nature of the fall from which to infer necessarily the destruction of the constitutional powers of free agency in Adam or his posterity."—p. 29. We find another example of this error in a tract entitled "MAN A FREE AGENT WITHOUT THE AIDS OF DIVINE GRACE," which is considered one of the ablest arguments extant, against the Arminian views of ability. The opponents of the doctrine of natural ability are thus placed in the position of denying the doctrine of free agency, while its advocates avail themselves of the powerful and unanswerable arguments in favour of the doctrine of free agency, and set them down as so much in favour of the doctrine of natural ability. And if the arguments which belong to one of these doctrines were equally applicable to both, they would acquire an easy triumph. But they are not. The doctrines are not the same. The arguments which apply to the one do not apply to the other.

The question now to be settled is not whether man is a free agent, but whether man, who is unquestionably a free

agent, is *naturally* able—able without grace to assist him, to perform certain prescribed exercises. All men are free agents, and yet some men can perform acts far beyond the utmost ability of others. Because the school-boy is a free agent, is he therefore able to do whatever his tutor or his parents can do? If it be essential to free agency to be naturally able to do whatever is possible to be done, God is the only free agent in the universe.

It would indeed be a marvellous affair, if Calvinism and Methodism should so change ground, that the latter should deny the doctrine of free agency, and the former stand up in defence of it. But this has not been done. This is not the state of the controversy. Calvinism has denied it. Methodism never did. We have contended for it from the beginning, and borne no little reproach on that account. We have as long and as constantly opposed the Pelagian doctrine of natural ability.

A little further explanation will lay the matter fairly open. Calvinists, pressed by the arguments of their opponents against the doctrine of the foreordination, and consequent necessity, of every event that comes to pass, have been compelled to admit that man is a free agent, in order to lay the basis of human accountability, and justify rewards and punishments. The task has then devolved upon them of reconciling their doctrine of predestination with man's free agency. In this field they have had to labour with distressing, exhausting toil. They have contrived, however, a theory, or perhaps a variety of theories, which, in their estimation, bring these tenets to an agreement. But, after all, their free agency is one which can do nothing but what was preordained from all eternity, and is brought about by the providence of God, working by a very complicate, but effective machinery of influence, operating, however, as they say, in accordance with the laws of mind.

But when they have got through the task of reconciling the predestination of all events with man's free agency, the patient and assiduous employment of all their learning and ingenuity is demanded, in order to reconcile the election of a definite number of men to eternal life, to the exclusion of all the rest, and the particular and exclusive redemption, by Christ, of the elect, with the offers of salvation to all men, and the obligation of all men to repent and believe the gospel. For, admitting that all men are free agents, what chance for salvation have those for whose salvation God has made no provision, and whose exclusion from saving mercy he has decreed? Why offer salvation to those for whom it is not intended, and who have not power to accept it? It is for the purpose of reconciling these doctrines, as we have shown, that the distinction of ability into natural and moral is resorted to; and from this distinction, maintained for this purpose, arises the doctrine of the natural ability of all men to repent and believe.

Shall we inquire into the nature of the free agency for which they contend? It is defined, by the author of the tract, to consist "in the faculties of understanding, conscience, and will." He argues, "We know, therefore, that man did not lose his free agency in Adam, unless he ceased to be man; for understanding, conscience, and will, which make him a free agent, are constituent parts of his nature, &c." Again: "The only question is, are these faculties, understanding, conscience, and will, produced by supernatural grace? Do they pertain to man, as man; or are they supernatural appendages?" But who, we ask, ever denied, or made it necessary to prove, such a free agency as this? Who ever supposed such a free agency to be imparted by "supernatural grace?" Were an Arminian to forget himself so far as to deny that man is a free agent, or assert that he is dependent for his free agency

on the influence of grace, he would not mean that man is destitute of "understanding, conscience, and will," or that he has these faculties through grace; but that he has not *power* to exercise these faculties *otherwise than he does*, or that he depends on grace for that power. And such a position would be entirely beyond the reach of the arguments of the tract. It would be wholly different from that against which they are directed. They merely prove that man possesses all his constitutional faculties, without the assistance of grace. But why did not this writer prove that man is a free agent without grace, in the Arminian sense of the term? Because Calvinism does not recognise man as a free agent in that sense. While it accords to him a free agency which consists merely in the possession of faculties, it teaches that every exercise of these faculties is predetermined and brought about by God.

The ulterior design of this argument is to prove that free agency, without grace, involves ability to do, without grace, whatever is necessary to salvation. The writer says, "The power or faculty which chooses evil and which chooses good, is the same power differently used. There can be no sin in choosing evil unless there be power to choose good; or what is the same thing in an accountable being, power to avoid choosing evil." Again: "But man's ability and free agency are coextensive: and if he is responsible *so far*, and so far *only*, as he has ability, then so far, and so far only, is he a free agent." But the amount of the ability, which this demonstration contemplates, will be apparent, when his definition of *power* is taken into the account. He says, in a note, "The writer would acquaint the reader, that whenever he ascribes power or ability to sinful man to obey God, he speaks simply of the faculties which are here spoken of, as constituting him a free agent." We are thus seasonably cautioned against supposing that he ascribes to the sinner

power in the proper sense of the term—in the sense in which it is usually understood. He means by power, merely the possession of faculties. It is not necessary to accountability, on his scheme, that man should be able to exercise his faculties as is required of him, but merely that he possess the faculties themselves. We ask, in the language of Job, and with a somewhat similar feeling, “What doth this arguing reprove?” It is doubtless intended to leave the impression, that man is a free agent, without grace, in the popular and proper sense of the term, and that free agency includes the power, strictly speaking, to do, without grace, whatever is necessary to salvation; but between such a conclusion, and the arguments of the tract, there is obviously no logical connection whatever.

But, apart from the sophistries of this writer, it may be both entertaining and profitable to inquire, if it is, in fact, essential to free agency to be able to comply with the terms of salvation. We think it is not. A being may be able to act otherwise than he does, in a great variety of instances, and yet be unable to pursue a certain course of action, necessary to the attainment of a certain end. As has already been said, it is not necessary to free agency, to be able to do whatever is possible to be done. It is no more necessary to free agency, in the abstract, to be able to repent of sin, and love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, or perform any other specific exercises, than it is to be able to fly, or breathe as freely in the water as in the open air. The range of a man’s freedom may be very much circumscribed without destroying his free agency. Imprison him, and he is still a free agent. Chain him to the floor of his prison, and he has still, to some extent, freedom of thought and action. So the fall may have greatly restricted our liberty; it may have destroyed our freedom of will, in respect to many things, without destroying our free agency itself. The

attribute may still remain, though its operations be confined within a narrow sphere. And this, so far as we understand it, is the doctrine of Arminianism. It does not teach that the fall has destroyed man's power of acting, in any instance, otherwise than he does act; but of performing a certain class of actions. The language of our Church on the subject is, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to *faith and calling upon God*; wherefore we have no power to do *good works, pleasant and acceptable to God*, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a *good will*, and working with us when we have that good will."

Whatever difficulties may attach to this theory, we certainly shall not seek to relieve ourselves of them by adopting that which is presented by modern Calvinism. For if the whole of man's power consists merely in the possession of constitutional faculties, and every exercise of these faculties was foreordained by God, and is brought about by his influence, as Calvinists hold, we should despair of being able to prove him a free agent, either with or without grace.

The argument of our opponents frequently proceeds on the assumption, that to deny that fallen man possesses a *natural* ability to obey the gospel, involves the consequence, that he has "no natural power." The fallacy of this is glaring. To deny, without any qualification, that man has natural ability, would be absurd indeed. But this is not the question. We deny that he possesses a *natural* ability to perform those specific exercises which God requires, in order to his salvation. Every living man is supposed to have natural ability to do *something*, but that does not imply a natural ability to do *every* thing. Samson had natural ability when, shorn of his extraordinary strength, he went out as another man; but that does

not prove that the strength by which he carried off the gates of Gaza was natural to him. Nor is it necessary for us to maintain that fallen man has not power, naturally, to do, in many instances, what may be required of him, in preference to what he actually does. Take the murderer, for instance, or the man who has defrauded the government,—we need not assume the ground, that grace was necessary to enable these men to have acted differently, in these respects, from what they are supposed to have done. And certainly the law of God required them to act differently. The law of God requires the right use of the power we possess naturally, as well as that imparted by divine influence. But a very partial conformity to the law in some instances, is a very different thing from the performance of whatever the law demands. To decline murder, or robbery, or adultery, is not sufficient to make a man a Christian. The question, therefore, returns unsettled,—Has man, without gracious influence assisting him, the power to do whatever is indispensable to his salvation?

It is also assumed that those scriptures which charge on sinners an unwillingness to come to Christ, prove that they possess naturally the ability which is necessary. These texts certainly prove what they inculcate, but they neither affirm nor imply any thing respecting the source of the power by which those who *will* to obey the claims of duty, carry their purposes into execution. And yet this is the point in dispute. They are perfectly consistent with the doctrine, that for the power to take the first, and each successive step, the sinner is indebted to divine influence—a doctrine which, in other parts of the Scriptures, is positively asserted. We suppose that had the man with the withered hand refused to stretch it forth, he would have defeated the kind intentions of the Saviour. But does this fact prove that he had power to stretch it forth

independently of the power of Christ? Neither does the fact, that the unwillingness of sinners to come to Christ prevents their salvation, prove that they have power to come to Christ unaided by the Spirit.

CHAPTER IV.

ABILITY CONTINUED.

THE reader will perceive that the question at issue is not, whether man possesses one or more of the different *kinds* of ability, into which power may be distinguished; or whether he is, without grace, wholly destitute of natural power; or whether he can, in any instance, act otherwise than he does, without divine influence; or whether he possesses all the constitutional faculties of human nature; or whether he is a free agent. Nor is it, whether he actually possesses the ability requisite to the observance of the divine law; but whether, admitting that he possesses the requisite ability, does he possess it naturally and independently of the influences of the Holy Spirit. We think that we have shown unanswerably that he does not.

But the arguments of our opponents are not all defensive. They have made resolute aggressions on the Arminian doctrine. It is argued, that, as no man can be responsible for the nonperformance of what is beyond his ability,—as total inability is incompatible with moral obligation,—to teach that grace is necessary to impart ability to keep the law of God, is to make grace necessary to accountability. This objection is pushed out to remoter consequences; and with the view of overwhelming Arminianism with absurdities, we are told, that, according to our doctrine, man is not only made a responsible being

by grace, but also becomes punishable by grace, and, of course, if damned, is damned by grace, so that the grace of the Arminian turns out to be a curse rather than a blessing.

It is not necessary, in answering this objection, to deny that man is responsible in proportion to his ability. Indeed the foundation of this objection has, in our estimation, already been swept away. It evidently assumes, that the doctrine that man has not power, without gracious aid, to do whatever is required of him, is equivalent to the assertion that he has *no power* whatever without grace—no natural ability. This does not follow. We might be able to act differently from what we do, without grace, and yet be unable to perform those exercises with which God has seen proper to connect our salvation. An inability to do one thing, may not imply an inability to do another. Had not God seen proper to require of man more than he has power naturally to perform, and to empower him to meet those requirements, by supernatural influence, he might still have constituted him a responsible being, by bringing down the exactions of his government to a level with his natural ability. The law of God requires, as we have already seen, that all the power we possess should be appropriately exerted, whether that power be natural or supernatural. So that grace may not be necessary to constitute man a responsible being, although it greatly affects the degree of his responsibility. He may be responsible, and yet not responsible for that which exceeds his ability.

But admitting, for argument sake, that our theory does make man's accountability to depend wholly on power supernaturally imparted, the objection alleged against it, on this ground, may be shown to be wholly imaginary.

That power and advantages affect obligations and responsibilities cannot be denied. This principle is seen to operate on various orders of animated being. For instance, a man has a right to require service of the inferior

animals. But he cannot justly require of his dog the services which he may justly require of his horse. The reason is obvious. He may, for the same reason, be chargeable with cruelty in exacting of one of his horses, the services he might with perfect humanity require of another, on account of the difference between them in respect to swiftness or strength. It will be readily admitted, that the responsibilities of man are very different from those of brutes. God, by conferring on him reason, has made him subject to laws and retributions, which are utterly inapplicable to them.

And, dropping the comparison between men and inferior creatures, the responsibilities of men are found to vary, on this very principle. Here is an idiot; has he the same responsibility with the man of sound mind? And among those in possession of reason there is a wide difference as to accountability. The man who has been denied the advantages of education, and is, moreover, doomed to poverty and sickness, differs widely in this respect from the man who possesses the advantages of property, and health, and learning.

Now, what is that doctrine against which this objection is urged? It is this, that God has seen fit, for the superior happiness of man, and his own glory, instead of bringing down the requirements of his law to the natural ability of fallen and depraved man, to require more of him than he is naturally able to perform, and to make up the deficiency of power by supernatural influence. That this influence, and the power it imparts, increase our responsibilities, and affect the retributive awards of divine justice, we not only admit, but freely and emphatically assert. But this is a most equitable and universal principle of government. The objection is therefore wholly baseless.

But if the objector still insists upon it, let him be warned of the position in which he places himself. He must

either deny that responsibility is graduated on this principle, and hold that God may justly require of a brute all that he requires of a man—of an idiot, all that he requires of one possessed of sound intelligence ; or that, as horses and idiots are not morally accountable, nor capable of sinning against him, nor liable to damnation, the bestowment of those qualifications which make the difference in responsibility, and render liable to the awful punishments of hell, is a curse and not a blessing. To be consistent, he must deny that these superior qualifications are blessings, or swallow the absurdities which he attempts to force upon us, namely, that man is made a sinner by the divine blessing, is made punishable by the divine blessing, and is damned by the divine blessing.

The principle of the objection is, that an acquisition, to be a blessing, or of grace, must involve no additional responsibility. Its practical bearing is, that there would be no grace in saving a drowning man ; in opening the eyes of the blind ; in substituting the light and order of reason for the darkness and confusion of insanity ; or in sending the gospel to the heathen, unless it were ascertained that these acts would not impose increased responsibility.

Thus we see that the rock of offence, which the objector has raised against us, falls back upon himself, “and grinds him to powder.” It would seem as though some theologists were willing to borrow arguments from infidelity itself, for the purpose of discrediting Arminianism ; and are determined to destroy it, even if, for that purpose, they must undermine the whole fabric of Christianity.

Another objection is, that, inasmuch as justice requires that power should be commensurate with responsibility, there is a contradiction in saying, that the power for the exercise of which we are responsible, is of grace. It is thus presented by Mr. Finney : “ This giving the sinner *power*, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to obey God, is what

the Arminians call a *gracious ability*, which terms are a manifest absurdity. What is grace? It is undeserved favour; something to which we have no claim in justice; that which may be withheld without injustice. If this is a true definition, it is plain that a gracious ability to do our duty is absurd. It is a dictate of reason, of conscience, of common sense, and of our natural sense of justice, that if God require of us the performance of any duty or act, he is bound in justice to give us *power* to obey; that is, he must give us the faculties and strength to perform the act. But if justice require it, why call it a gracious ability? Natural ability to do our duty cannot be a gracious ability. To call it so is to confound grace and justice as meaning the same thing.”—*Sermons*, p. 25.

This argument depends for its plausibility on the meaning which those who employ it choose to attach to the term *grace*. That it signifies *favour* is undeniable; but this is not the only sense in which it is used. It also signifies the influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart; and we can hardly suppose that it did not occur to Mr. F., that this might be the sense in which Arminians use it in this connection. But the recognition of this fact would have spoiled his argument. It is a matter of indifference to us, so far as the doctrine under consideration is concerned, whether the spiritual influence, which we affirm to be necessary, be called grace or justice—whether the ability imparted be called gracious ability or equitable ability. The truth still remains, that to this influence man is indebted for his ability to obey the gospel. Thus easily, as we think, is this boastful argument destroyed; it is a mere play upon terms. The communication of the requisite power may be both of grace and justice, without confounding the meaning of the terms. Whether the power is of grace, in the sense of favour or not, is a distinct question.

And even if the term grace be taken in the latter sense, there will be no contradiction in supposing that the power it imparts is, at the same time, of justice. A work may be commenced as a favour, strictly, which justice may require to be carried out. The whole plan of salvation had its origin in grace, and grace will lead on to its consummation; and yet it might not be consistent with justice to arrest it midway, repeal all its provisions, and suffer the wicked and the just to be blended in one common doom. This point is capable of varied and almost endless illustration. Dr. Fisk has justly said, "If a physician should cut off the limb of a poor man, to save his life, is he not bound *in justice*, after he has commenced the operation, to take up the arteries, and save the man from dying by the operation?" And yet "the man on whom the surgeon operates may be poor and perverse," and the operation undertaken solely as an act of grace.

A writer in the *Christian Spectator*, in an elaborate article on the subject of human ability, objects to the Arminian theory, that it makes the power by which obedience is rendered to God, "not human, but divine power," and charges on it these consequences:—"The sinner loving God is God loving himself, and the sinner repenting of sin is God repenting of sin." It would not be paying a very high compliment to the intelligence of his readers to suppose them converted to his views, or their previous faith in them strengthened, by the argument by which he attempts to fasten these absurdities on Arminianism. It is vitiated throughout by the gross fallacy of confounding faculties or attributes, with the power or energy by which they are exerted. He writes, "Love to God, repentance for sin, faith in the Saviour, are and must be the sinner's own acts or exercises, that is, *his own powers or faculties*, exercised in these forms. The proximate *powers* in exer-

cise, must be *his own* subjective mental *powers*, or the acts cannot be his own acts."

Now there is no controversy as to whether man serves God with his own faculties or the attributes of the Deity. The question is, Does man possess the energy—the *power* strictly—to exercise these *powers* as the gospel requires, without the assistance of the Holy Spirit? And yet this writer would charge us with consequences which presuppose an assertion, that man depends on grace for the necessary constitutional faculties.

But, apart from the meager and absurd philosophy of New Divinity, it may be supposed that the suggestion, that, according to our theory, man obeys God by divine, and not human power, contains a real difficulty. That the power in question is divine, we are not concerned to deny, and yet it is as certainly human. Whence, we ask, did Adam derive his physical power in creation? Was it not directly from God? And was it less his own personal power because thus imparted? Could not God have imparted additional power to Adam at any subsequent period, and made it as much his power as that imparted in creation? If, then, he should see proper to impart, by gracious influences, additional strength to him, is there any more inconsistency in calling it human power, than there would have been if it had been imparted at first? Surely not. And the power imparted to us by grace is as much *ours* as the power imparted to Adam in creation was *his*. Its exercise depends equally, in both cases, on human volition. The experience of those who were immediately qualified by God to execute the pattern of the Jewish tabernacle, is illustrative of the point in hand. They were thus enabled to do what they were previously unable to do. But who will pretend that the power they thus exerted was not *their* power, and that the act of making the tabernacle was God's act, and not theirs? On the princi-

ple adopted by the objector, it might be insisted upon that the power with which Samson carried off the gates of Gaza was not Samson's, and that in truth he did not perform that act. Who, that is familiar with his Bible, does not know that the power of the Christian is frequently called the power of God, to indicate its source and man's dependance, and to secure to God the praise due to him, while it is also spoken of as man's power, for the exercise of which he is held responsible? Now is there any more inconsistency in these views, than in those which declare every thing in the wide universe to be the property of God, and yet contemplate our possessions as *ours*, and subject to our volition and appropriation?

It is also objected, that a denial of the doctrine that man possesses natural ability to serve God, makes the will or inclination to perform an act, essential to, and identical with, the power to perform it.

This objection is evidently based on the supposition, that fallen man has, of himself, every thing that is necessary to his serving God, excepting the will or inclination. This notion we have shown to be utterly unfounded. We have adduced Scripture authority, proving that when the will or inclination is present, and manifesting itself in efforts to do what is right, those efforts may fail through depravity. But, although this objection does not lie against Arminianism, it is properly chargeable on those who hold the distinction of natural and moral ability. They not only make the will essential to power, in every instance, but also identical with it, and this is one of the objections which we have to that distinction.

This argument against our theory is urged with great earnestness by Mr. Hinton, and in a form which may entitle it to particular consideration. It is managed with considerable adroitness, but a close inspection and analysis will expose its fallacy. Mr. H. adopts the term *disposi-*

tion, in preference to *will* or *inclination*, and defines it thus: “*The habitually prevalent state of the heart in any respect, we call the DISPOSITION of a man in that respect.*” He distinguishes it from inclination, which, he says, “is not necessarily either habitual or prevailing: it may be neither.” He also distinguishes it from AFFECTIONS, which he considers “*occasional, temporary, and subordinate states of feeling;*” and also from WILL, which he conceives to mean “either a simple *determination*, or the *faculty of determining* according to our feelings.”

By adopting, and thus defining, the term *disposition*, in this argument, Mr. H. expects, we suppose, to gain several important points. In the first place, he makes indisposition to serve God, include the whole of human depravity; so that if he can succeed in his attempt to prove that full power to serve God may be possessed in connection with that want of disposition to serve him, which constitutes depravity, it will follow of course, that depravity does not interfere with power. He will also secure the position, that the Holy Spirit’s influences may be necessary to change the disposition or habitually prevalent state of the heart, and yet not necessary to give ability to keep the law of God. It is quite plain, that if he can carry these points, he will establish the doctrine which we are endeavouring to refute.

Having, in this manner, prepared his way, he proposes the question, “*Is our having a disposition toward any action essential to our having power to perform it?*”

But, in tracing his argument, we find that he entirely forgets his definition, and uses the term “disposition” in the sense of *inclination* and *will*, and interchangeably with those terms. He remarks, in the process of his reasoning, “Nothing is more common, and few things are more important, than the distinction between power and *inclination*. You can, but you *will* not, is language almost in-

cessantly used, and the basis of some very important transactions ; as when an idle fellow is sent to the treadmill, or an able but reluctant debtor to the prison.”—p. 112. So that instead of proving that there is nothing in the habitually prevalent state of a sinner’s heart, which affects his power of keeping the divine law, he merely proves, that inclination or will, or disposition in the sense of these terms, is not essential to power. But he had previously informed his readers, that the terms will and inclination are not synonymous with disposition, and do not represent the “habitually prevalent state of the heart ;” so that he virtually abandons his project in the progress of the argument.

Again, by the manner in which he proposes the question for argument, the point at issue is evaded. The question is not, whether will, or inclination, or disposition to perform an action, is essential to the power to perform it ; but whether disinclination, or a contrary disposition, may be so strong and intense, as to destroy the power. These questions, when examined, will appear widely different. I may be able to move onward against a certain amount of resistance, but if that resistance be increased, I may thereby be rendered unable to proceed another step. But it is not, therefore, necessary to enable me to proceed, that the whole resisting force should be reversed in its direction, so as to impel me forward. It is not necessary to remove entirely the resistance, but merely to diminish it. Apply the illustration to the subject before us. Suppose a certain amount of disinclination, or indisposition, to disable a man to perform the act to which he is thus indisposed ; it does not follow that he must have a positive disposition to perform that act, to enable him to perform it. It may be sufficient that the strength of the contrary disposition be diminished.

That depravity, whatever it may consist in, does inter-

fere with the power to live a strictly holy life, is not only the dictate of Scripture, but also of reason.

To suppose the contrary, implies that it is as easy for the most abandoned profligate to resist temptations to vice, as it is for the most moral and religious—that it is as easy for the veriest miser to contribute a thousand pounds to a purely benevolent object, as it is for the most benevolent man—that the difficulty of becoming religious is not at all increased by habitual and persevering profligacy, a sentiment at war with the universal judgment of men. And to this result Mr. H.'s theory has actually conducted him. "We are quite ready," he remarks, "to admit the fact, that a disposition toward an action seems to render the doing of it easy, and that a contrary disposition seems to render it difficult, sometimes even to impossibility. But it *only seems* to do so."—p. 115. It appears, then, that the whole religious world in particular, has been labouring under a delusion on this subject, which New Divinity has the honour to dispel. We have been accustomed from our boyhood to hear, from the pulpits of different denominations, as a motive to immediate repentance, that postponement and crime harden the heart, and render the exercises of repentance more difficult. But this argument must now be laid aside. Other reasons for instant attention to the claims of the gospel may exist, but this is destroyed. It is discovered to be fallacious. No difficulty is thus created. It will be as easy for the debauchee to become a Christian, when he has grown hoary in crime, as it is before he enters on his polluted career. The inspired writers, too, and even the Saviour himself, must come in for a share of this timely correction, and must now stand instructed, that those who "are accustomed to do evil" have no more difficulty in learning "to do well," than those who have yet to form all their habits; and that so far from the rich having any peculiar difficulty in be-

coming Christians, it is just as easy for the wealthy and proud to enter the kingdom of God, as it is for those who are poor, and comparatively humble.

But if disposition may interfere with power, will it not follow, that ability and disposition, inability and indisposition, are identical? No! Whether they are in fact identical or not, no such conclusion results from these premises. The objection assumes, that whatever causes inability to perform an action, is identical with inability to perform it, and that the facilities, caused by the removal of the impediment, are identical with the ability that results. This, however, is not the case. Suppose a vehicle drawn by two spirited and powerful horses. The driver turns into a bye-road, and brings the wheels in contact with an obstacle. The horses are unable to go forward. But is the obstacle which causes the inability, in this case, identical with the inability? The driver finds it necessary to remove the obstruction. But is the facility, caused by its removal, to be identified with the ability of the horses to proceed? No one would imagine such a thing. In like manner, indisposition may cause inability, and disposition may cause ability, and yet these things be entirely distinct.

We think this plausible objection fairly refuted, and yet it may be satisfactory to some of our readers to have additional light on the relation which will, inclination, and disposition actually sustain to power.

If by the will we understand the power of volition—the “faculty of determining,” it is clear enough, that it is essential to the power to perform voluntary actions; unless we suppose a man able to perform such actions, in the absence of a faculty which is indispensable to their performance.

If the term “will” be taken in the sense of simple volition, the will is essential to the ability to perform voluntary ac-

tions. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that the volition must necessarily precede the action. To affirm that a man has power to do what, in this sense, he does not will to do, would be as unphilosophical as to affirm that he has power to talk without employing the organs of speech. So that when we say, a man has power to perform a certain action, we include the idea that he has power to will its performance.

But if the term be understood in the sense of inclination, the case is altered. Inclination is not *in all* cases essential to power. There are, and must be, many actions which we can perform, although we are disinclined to the performance of them. Were not this the case, there would be no reason in exhortations to sacrifice of feeling, or self-denial. It would be absurd to expect a man to act contrary to his inclination, and, of course, to exhort him to that effect.

We go further. We say that indisposition does not always destroy the power to perform the action against which its influence is directed, taking the word according to Mr. Hinton's definition, and construing it to include the whole of human depravity. Else it were utterly useless to require a man to act, in any instance, against his depravity. It would be absolutely necessary for some foreign power to remove the depravity, before man could possibly act, in any instance, in a contrary course. This would destroy the relevancy, and effect, of all exhortations addressed to confessedly depraved beings, requiring them to change, in any respect, their line of conduct.

And yet, there may be other actions, which require the disposition, and inclination, as essential to the power to perform them. Take, for instance, those strictly spiritual exercises which proceed from love to God. To say that a man can perform these with a contrary disposition, is equivalent to saying that he can perform, from a principle

of enmity to God, the exercises which invariably proceed from supreme love to God. To such exercises the inspired writers have reference, when they tell us that "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, *neither* indeed *can* be," and that the natural man neither discerns, nor can discern, the things of the Spirit. To the ability requisite for these things, another state of mind is absolutely necessary.

The practical bearing of these views, which, we believe, contain the philosophy of the Scriptures on the subject, is this,—although the unregenerate sinner cannot, in his present condition, do all that is required of him in order to salvation, there are some things which he can do, even against his inclination—against his depravity, the performance of which, with the blessing of God, has a tendency to undermine that depravity, and superinduce another state of mind. They are the "works meet for repentance" which God has made indispensable to pardon and regeneration. He can, for instance, go to the church instead of the theatre. He can give his attention to the ministry of the word. He can read his Bible. He can take first one step, and then another, in that preliminary process which leads on to the disposition, and inclination, and power, to do whatever God commands.

With these explanations, we can easily dispose of Mr. H.'s plausible illustrations. Does he intimate that, according to our theory, the man who has "sufficient money to satisfy his creditors, but is fond of gaming," has "no disposition," and therefore no "power to pay his debts?" We reply, no such consequence results from it. He may be able to do all this, notwithstanding his indisposition. The law of the land proceeds on the supposition that this to the case. And yet there may be other things which he cannot do against his disposition. Hence the gospel not only requires those exercises for which the disposition is

necessary, but also provides means by which the disposition may be acquired.

Mr. H. endeavours to fix on the notion that power may depend on disposition, the charge of absurdity,—“As, for instance,” he says, “I am surrounded by several hundred places, and am not disposed to go to any of them. But have I, therefore, no power to go to any of them? In that case I must be considered as fixed, literally like a rock, to my position, till I am disposed to move, with which disposition to move, it appears, my power of moving is identical.”—p. 113.

The answer to this is, that while disposition may be essential to power in *some* instances, it is not in *every* instance. Mr. H. observes a caution in the statement of his premises, which seems to indicate that he was fully aware of this distinction. He remarks, “On the contrary, the obvious fact is, that we have power to do *many* things, *whether we are disposed to do them or not.*” But he is chargeable with the fallacy of arguing from the fact that we can do “*many things*” without the disposition, that we can do *any thing* possible to be done by us, without the disposition. The one is admitted, but not the other. He may be able to go to any one of the hundred places, notwithstanding he is not disposed, and yet, he may not be able to go to heaven, or do that which is necessary to take him there, without the disposition.

But the most remarkable feature of Mr. H.’s argument is the manner in which he involves himself in the absurdity in which he attempts to involve his opponents. On the supposition, that disposition to go to any of these places is essential to the power, he argues, “In that case I must be considered as fixed, literally like a rock, to my position,” &c. And yet he tells us, in the very next paragraph, that, although disposition is not necessary to power, “Nothing certainly can be more obvious than that

a voluntary being *will never* act further than he feels a disposition to do so." So that in attempting to chain his opponents, he has chained himself; for, according to his own showing, whether a man *can* change his position or not, without a disposition, no voluntary agent *ever will*; so that the man without the disposition must assuredly stay where he is.

Is it objected that our doctrine represents grace as necessary, not because man is wicked, but because he is weak? We reply, that it contemplates grace as necessary, because man is both wicked and weak. Weakness may proceed from depravity, as well as from other causes, but it is weakness still, and there is no inconsistency in supposing that the plan of salvation has made provision for its remedy.

CHAPTER V.

DEPRAVITY.

HAVING shown that the Scriptures are decidedly at variance with the doctrine of the natural ability of fallen man to obey God; and having also ascertained the utter failure of the principal arguments relied on to sustain it, we shall proceed to examine the other constituent parts of the system, to which this doctrine leads by plain logical consequence.

It is supposed, by some, that this controversy on the subject of ability, is wholly unimportant,—that if the ability of the sinner to do his duty is admitted, nothing is gained, or lost, by adopting either the one theory or the other, respecting the source of that ability. This is a mistake. The doctrine of natural ability modifies extensively the system of theology which includes it, and introduces, in fact, "another gospel."

This theory of ability, as *it is usually stated*, leads to the doctrine, that all depravity lies in the will—that it consists wholly in unwillingness. The process of deduction is easy. We are told that all have a natural ability to love and serve God, and that all which hinders our love and obedience to him is our *want of will*. Now it is that which hinders our love and obedience to God which constitutes our depravity. Our unwillingness, therefore, as it is the only hindrance to the love and service of God, constitutes our depravity, and the whole of our depravity.

This consequence is not denied; but the view of human depravity which it presents, is frequently and confidently affirmed. Dr. Tyler, in a sermon on “Free Salvation,” published in the second volume of the “National Preacher,” writes thus: “Why is it necessary that men should be born again? Not because they are *unable* to do their duty, if they will; but because they are *unwilling* to do it. It is their *depravity* which renders the supernatural change necessary. But their depravity is not their calamity merely, but their crime. It consists, as we have seen, in a perverse *inclination*; in a voluntary and obstinate refusal to yield obedience to the reasonable commands of Jehovah. What the sinner needs, therefore, is to have this perverse inclination changed; that is, to be *made willing* to do what God requires. The necessity for this change, therefore, supposes *no obstacle* in the way of his salvation, except his own *unwillingness* to do his duty.”

Dr. Tyler, we would remark, is an Old School writer. We have quoted from him merely to show, that this tendency of the doctrine of natural ability is recognised, and the consequence held.

Dr. Lansing says, in his sermon on the Necessity of Regeneration, “Nothing more is necessary for God to do for you, than to make you *willing*; and hence your voluntary opposition to him is the *only obstacle* to your salva-

tion." This doctrine is asserted by Mr. Barnes, in his answer to the protest against his sermon. He endeavours to prove that this is the doctrine of the Confession of Faith. He says, "In this passage the following things are thought worthy of observation:—1. That here is an express and formal definition of what the framers of the constitution meant by inability. This is the object of the chapter, *to explain the state of man since the fall*, in reference to obeying the law of God. 2. That they expressly affirm that the *difficulty is in the will*, having lost all ability of will. Nor do they mention *any other difficulty or obstacle* in the way of man's conversion, but what lies *in the will*. That is evidently implying that if the will were right, there were *no other obstacle*." Indeed, President Edwards himself carried the doctrine of natural ability directly to this result. With respect to depravity he says, in his treatise on the will, "Now this doctrine supposes no other necessity of sinning than a *moral* necessity; which, as has been shown, don't at all excuse sin; and supposes no other inability to obey any command or perform any duty, even the most spiritual and exalted, but a moral inability." This moral inability he defines to consist "in the opposition, or want of inclination."

But the doctrine of natural ability leads to still more ultra and dangerous views of human depravity. It leads to the consequence that depravity consists solely in *voluntary exercises*. Any other view of depravity is found to conflict with the doctrine of natural ability. Even disinclination or unwillingness, may be so strong as to constitute a real inability to do, in some instances, that to which it is opposed. President Edwards justly remarks:—"I suppose that none will deny but that *in some cases* a previous bias, or inclination, or the motive presented, *may* be so powerful that the act of the will may be constantly and indissolubly connected therewith. When motives or pre-

vicious bias are very strong, all will allow that there is some difficulty in going against them. And if they were yet stronger, the difficulty will be greater: and therefore, if more were still added to their strength, to a certain degree, it would make the difficulty so great that it would be *impossible to surmount it.*" Unwillingness, or disinclination, constitutes the moral inability of New School Calvinism; and whenever it constitutes a real inability, that inability is natural; as much so as that arising from any other cause. It has its origin in the constitution of our nature. The doctrine, therefore, that depravity consists in unwillingness or disinclination to serve God, which may constitute a real inability, and which moreover may be hereditary and constitutional, is at variance with the doctrine of natural ability. Nor will it answer to make depravity consist in *habit*: for the tendency of vicious habit is to interfere with the ability to serve God. So the Scriptures represent:—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The only way, therefore, of securing the doctrine of natural ability, is by locating depravity in the action itself. Whether I have hit on the process of reasoning by which the disciples of New Divinity come to this conclusion or not, it is certain that to this conclusion many of them have come. They deny that depravity is constitutional and hereditary, or that it consists in a principle, or disposition, or propensity, or taste, or corruption of our nature; or any thing which "lies back" of the will, or is anterior to our voluntary exercises, or is the cause of them, and maintain that it consists solely in the actions themselves.

This view of depravity is strenuously advocated by Mr. Duffield, in his work on regeneration. He thus states the different theories on the subject, at the commencement of his investigations:—"Whether depravity is to be found

exclusively in the will, or equally in all the faculties—whether it has its origin in a modification of our essential nature—whether it is created in us, or derived by a natural descent—whether it consists in acts or exercises, or in something back of them, which lays the foundation for them in the very nature of the essential soul—whether it is some deranged and inappropriate exercise of our moral powers, and to be referred to the character of the controlling objects, or of the governing moral principle—are questions that have been seriously agitated.” The theory which he adopts is, that “it consists in acts and exercises,” in “some deranged and inappropriate exercises.”

He says, “We cannot conceive of enmity against God consisting in constitution, or mere existence, abstract essence, or mere nature. It is in its *very nature*, really and formally the workings or the *acts and exercises* of a rational and feeling creature, so that when the apostles resolve all that is in the world, which is not of the Father, into lustings, and represent these lustings to be in enmity with God, we are infallibly directed in making our estimate of human depravity, to have *exclusive* regard to the *acts and exercises* of the human soul.”—p. 338.

Again: “And the reason is, because practically we do not predicate depravity of the corporeal or even mental constitution of man, but of *the actual exercise* of those powers which are implied or requisite in the willing to do, or doing what the law prohibits, or refusing what it requires.”—*Ibid.*

Again: “And God being under no obligation, nor choosing in this world to vouchsafe the influence of his Holy Spirit, which is necessary to prevent from choosing what is wrong—there shall take place *those acts* of which *alone* we can legitimately and intelligently predicate *moral depravity*.”—p. 379.

“Charge not your impenitence on any constitutional depravity.”—p. 344.

“For it does not appear that Adam lost or acquired any physical property by his rebellion; nor that his nature, consisting simply of his created substance and its constitutional properties, sustained any physical change by his sin. *His voluntary exercises* were sadly deranged, and became awfully depraved; but that depravity formed no part of his substance, *nor belonged to his constitutional properties*. It attached to his character as a moral agent. How then could he transmit by natural generation *what did not inhere in his own constitution?*”—p. 284.

“Must we believe that men are inclined in the same way to sin, and that therefore, because of *an innate propensity to sin*—the foundation laid in the very nature—that nature apart from, and prior to, any of its *moral actings*, is sinful? This is to make men sin by physical necessity.”—p. 307.

“His depravity consists in the misdirection and inappropriate *exercise* of his faculties; not in wrong faculties inherited. And many causes may operate to secure such a direction and exercise of his faculties, without inferring from false analogies, suggested by a false physiology, that it must be an *operative principle* in the very soul, *apart* from and *anterior* to its exercises.”—p. 310.

Mr. Finney, who has acquired great eminence in the ranks of New Divinity, comes forth as a bold and sturdy advocate of this doctrine. He says, in his sermon on total depravity, “Some persons have spoken of depravity, and of the pollution of our nature, as if there were some moral depravity *cleaving to*, or incorporated with, the very substance of our being. Now this is to talk utter nonsense. If such a depravity *were possible*, it would not be moral, but physical depravity. It could not be a depravity for which we were blameworthy. It could not be a

sinful depravity. It would be a disease, and not a crime."

"I do not mean by total depravity that there is the *same disposition* to sin belonging to the substance of body or mind that there is in a serpent to bite, or in a wolf to devour sheep. In other words, I do not mean that there is a *constitutional appetite or craving for sin* implanted in the substance of the body or the mind."

"Moral depravity is a quality of *voluntary action*, not of substance. It *does not belong to the constitution*, but belongs purely and exclusively to character."

"It is not meant there is *any thing* in the *constitution*, or substance of body or mind, that is opposed to God."

"It is not meant that there are *appetites*, or *propensities*, that are *constitutional*, which are enmity against God."

"Total depravity does not consist in any *principle* of sin that is incorporated with our being."

"By total depravity is not meant that any being is or can be sinful before he has *exercised the powers* of moral agency."

"I do not mean that there is some constitutional depravity, which *lies back*, and is the *cause* of actual transgression."

"By total depravity, I do not mean that there is *any sin* in human beings, or in any other beings separate from *actual transgression*."

"It should be well understood, and always remembered, that the *carnal mind*, as used by the apostle, is not the *mind itself*, but is a *voluntary action* of the mind."

"These discourses exhibit a very different view of total depravity, from that which regards depravity as physical or constitutional, or as *belonging* to the substance of the body or the mind. They exhibit all depravity as voluntary, as consisting in *voluntary transgression*."

"O the darkness, and confusion, and utter nonsense of

that view of depravity which exhibits it as something *lying back*, and the *cause* of all transgression!"

"From this subject you can see that the wicked conduct of sinners is no proof that their *nature is sinful*. The universal sinfulness of men has been supposed to conduct to the inevitable conclusion that the nature of man must be in itself sinful."

"The sinner's hatred of God is not caused by any hereditary or transmitted *disposition* to hate him. A disposition to hate God is itself hatred. Disposition is an *action* of the mind, and not a part of the mind itself. It is therefore absurd to talk of an hereditary or transmitted disposition to love or hate God, or any thing else."

Dr. Lansing, in his sermon on "The Inability of Sinners Voluntary," says, "We learn from our subject that *all sin* consists in the *voluntary exercises* of the sinning agent."

And if Mr. Barnes does not hold or intend to teach this doctrine, he certainly gives it countenance in those declarations to which his opponents have taken exception: 1. That "*all sin* consists in voluntary *action*." 2. "That infants have *no moral character*." By this latter assertion he evidently means, that until infants have performed voluntary accountable actions, they are neither holy nor depraved. Compare these assertions, and the result is, plainly, that all *depravity* consists in *voluntary action*. And in perfect accordance with this doctrine is his comment on the seventh verse of the eighth chapter of Romans: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." He says, "It does not mean the *mind itself*, the intellect, or the will; it does not suppose that the *mind or soul* is physically depraved, or opposed to God; but it means that the *minding of the things of the flesh*, giving to them supreme attention, is hostility to God." The tendency of

this comment is, evidently, to resolve all depravity into the *voluntary action* of the mind.

This doctrine is amply exhibited in a work published several years since in New-York, entitled "Views in Theology." The author of it asserts that "the Scriptural doctrine of depravity has *no* reference whatever to the physical constitution; *it relates exclusively to the actions of man*, and simply expresses the fact, that while unrenewed, he never exercises holiness."

The great object at which this author aims, is, to prove that any other view of depravity than that which makes it to consist solely in voluntary exercises, involves the doctrine of "physical depravity," and that those writers who have maintained the commonly received theory, are chargeable with maintaining the doctrine of physical depravity. His own views are further developed in the following passage:—

"There is nothing in the constitution of man on his coming into being, or at any subsequent period, which of itself—every thing else being thrown out of consideration—lays any foundation of a certainty what kind of actions he will exercise when placed under a moral influence; nothing from which it can be infallibly inferred that he will exercise sin instead of holiness, or holiness instead of sin; nor which can even present any more probability of his assuming the one character than the other.

"This results from his having precisely the same capacity for exercising the one species of actions as the other. Possessing identically the same capacity for obedience as for transgression, can any one imagine, that by simply looking at his capacity, any certainty or probability can be discerned of his exercising the one, rather than the other? Can a given capacity for sin constitute any certainty or probability that sin will be exercised, any more than precisely the same capacity for holiness

forms a certainty or probability that holiness will be exercised ?

“ Or, to approach the point through a different avenue. No depravity, corruption, taint, nor any other defect whatever of that nature, pertains to the constitution of man, rendering him physically incapable of acting in conformity to the divine will, or making his committing sin in any sense an infallible result. Nothing whatever exists in it, therefore, which must, by a necessity of its nature, prove a cause of sin ; nothing then which of course operates to the *production* of sin ; nothing, therefore, which constitutes a *tendency* to sin ; nothing, then, in short, which forms any more *certainty* or *probability* that he will exercise that species of actions which is *evil*, than that which is morally excellent.

“ Nothing then pertains to the physical nature of man which, of itself, presents any certainty or probability in what manner he will act, when placed under a moral influence. It has *no tendency* whatever one way or the other ; nothing partaking in any sense of depravity, corruption, or guilt, or making any approximation toward them ; nothing which is in any sense offensive to God ; but, on the contrary, it is perfectly acceptable to him : as free from odious defect, and as completely the object of his complacency as were the physical constitutions of the first pair when created—as are the natures of angels.”—Part iii, p. 55.

The author adds, “ This is undoubtedly a very different doctrine from that which is ordinarily inculcated.” It is. I thank God that he is right in this assertion. The fact, that such are the tendencies and doctrines of New School Calvinism, should arouse every Methodist, and every Old School Calvinist, to excited and vigilant jealousy over every thing that is vital and valuable in our common Christianity.

CHAPTER VI.

DEPRAVITY CONTINUED.

WE shall not take up much time in endeavouring to refute the doctrine that depravity consists solely in unwillingness or disinclination. It may be effectually disposed of, by comparing it with those passages from the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, which have already been quoted for other purposes. They settle the question summarily and decisively:—"For that which I do, I allow not; for what I *would* that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If, then, I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good." "For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me," Rom. vii. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," Gal. v, 17. This language, so far from representing that all depravity consists in unwillingness, declares the presence of a positive willingness—a willingness which leads to efforts to keep the law, and yet these efforts fail through depravity. The depravity, therefore, which causes the difficulty, whatever may be its specific nature, must be supposed to consist in something besides unwillingness; unless we are prepared to admit the absurdity, that the only reason why men are unable to perform that which they are willing and strive to perform, is, that they are *unwilling* and *do not strive* to perform it.

But the doctrine that depravity consists wholly in voluntary exercises, demands a more ample investigation; not

on account of its plausibility, but its most ruinous tendencies, theoretical and practical.

It will be necessary, in the first place, to present the question at issue, free from all embarrassing associations. It is one of the acts of sophistry, so to involve truth and error in the same statement, that the one may disparage or derive plausibility from, the other; that an assertion of the truth may seem to include an adoption of the error; and that a denial of the error may with some plausibility be construed into a denial of the truth. The question to be discussed is, whether depravity consists solely in voluntary exercises or actual transgression, or in something besides, which is the *source* of actual transgression. But the advocates of the "voluntary exercise" theory have seen proper to caricature the opposite doctrine, and associate it with questions from which it is entirely distinct. Of the design of this course we express no judgment. The tendency of it is to make the impression, that to maintain the doctrine they oppose requires the adoption and maintenance of whatever they have seen proper to associate with it. They write as though we must either adopt their theory, or hold that depravity consists in "constitution or mere existence, abstract essence or mere nature"—"in some, constitution of simple nature or created being,"—that it forms a part of man's "substance,"—that it is "created" and "lodged," or "implanted," or "incorporated" in, or "infused," or "injected" into the "constitution," or "internal essence and structure of the soul," or in "the very substance of the body or mind." We are told that "the mind is not saturated or soaked with enmity."

Now the question which we are at present discussing respects solely the *nature* of depravity. Whether it is derived by propagation, or superinduced by volition as in the case of Adam, or created by God—whether it is acquired by infusion, injection, absorption, implantation, or

lodgment—whether it is lodged in the essence of the soul, or attaches to it in some other way—or whether its seat is in the body or soul, are questions distinct and foreign from the point. Nor shall we feel ourselves under any obligation to prove that it consists in “created essence,” &c. Nor shall we undertake to determine its metaphysical nature, any further than instructed by the Scriptures. Nor do we care even to give it a name.

The Scriptures just quoted against the doctrine, that depravity consists wholly in unwillingness, are equally at variance with the doctrine under consideration. They represent depravity as something which resists the convictions and inclinations of the mind, and defeats its efforts. Is it affirmed, that this depravity consists solely in voluntary exercises? The result, then, will be plainly this, that simple volitions, uncaused by any propensity, rise up and defeat exertions which are directed by the convictions of the understanding, and enforced by inclination, and that these mysterious volitions result in actions, which the understanding condemns, and the inclination abhors—that the mind, without being prompted by any principle, propensity, disposition, or taste, rises up against its own convictions, inclinations, purposes, and volitions, and frustrates them, and puts forth volitions wholly at variance with itself.

But do the terms, in which the apostle speaks directly of depravity, accord with the doctrine, that it consists solely in voluntary exercises? The Scriptures do not deal in metaphysical propositions, but they are nevertheless based on true philosophy, and revolt at every interpretation which assumes a false philosophy. Let us try the passages to which we have just now referred. He styles it “the law of sin”—“the law of sin in my members”—“sin that dwelleth in me.” The failure to do good, and the commission of sin, are evidently attri-

buted to the law of sin as their source. "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." "But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." "Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." But if depravity consists wholly in actual transgression, then actual transgression is its own cause, which would be absurd. Let us further try the apostle's reasoning, on the supposition that depravity consists altogether in voluntary exercises. Will it not run thus?—"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but *voluntary action* that dwelleth in me." "I find then a law that when I would do good, evil *voluntary exercises* are present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see other *voluntary exercises* in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the *voluntary exercises* which are in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from these *voluntary exercises*?" It is impossible to interpret this passage in accordance with this theory of depravity, without outraging common sense.

Human depravity is frequently styled "the flesh," and spoken of, under that designation, in such a way as to exclude the doctrine that it consists solely in voluntary exercises. "For 'the flesh' lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Here "the flesh" or depravity, is represented as consisting, not in actions, but in something that acts. It maintains a warfare with the Spirit. It lusts against the Spirit. Actual transgression is denominated fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, in opposition to walking in the Spirit. There would be precisely the same authority for resolving the Spirit into voluntary exercises, as for resolv-

ing the flesh into voluntary exercises. But what would be the result of an attempt to interpret this text according to the theory to which we object? Mr. Duffield, as we have seen, in his effort to reconcile it with the doctrine of natural ability, says, "The word here translated 'would' denotes not only the choice, or purpose, but that choice or purpose, as influenced by the affections or feelings of desire." Again: "The Greek particle, translated *so that*, sometimes denotes design; and if, in this sense, it is to be here understood, the apostle's meaning is, that the influence of the Spirit in the believer is vouchsafed to counteract and frustrate his sinful inclinations. This we prefer, as being most agreeable to the apostle's assurance expressed in the previous verse. If it denotes merely the result eventually, nothing more can be inferred from it, than that the influence of the Spirit, which generates a holy inclination, is counteracted by corrupt desires and affections, so that it does not issue in the accomplishment of that to which he was inclined." The result of all this explanation is as follows: I have a "choice or purpose" to do good; that choice or purpose is influenced by my "affections or feelings of desire," or "a holy inclination;" this "holy inclination" is generated by the Holy Spirit: and yet this "choice or purpose," prompted by "affections or feelings of desire," or by "holy inclination" generated by the Holy Spirit, is counteracted by mere volitions, originating with themselves, having no cause or foundation in my nature, or any thing "belonging" or "cleaving" to it. Surely these voluntary exercises must be powerful indeed, thus to spring forth, self-created, and overcome other voluntary exercises, which one would suppose to be equally powerful with themselves, and at the same time prompted by holy inclinations and the Holy Spirit.

But it would be doing injustice to Mr. D. and our readers, to make the impression, that he considers that these

depraved volitions are wholly uncaused. He remarks, "Wherever we discover uniform results—a series of corresponding actions, all standing in the same relation to one specific substance, we insensibly assume the existence of some unvarying cause."—p. 250. Again: "That there is some appropriate cause of depravity, all admit."—p. 249.

He proceeds to assign the cause:—"Of the *precise* nature of this, it is obvious that we must be ignorant, as we are of all causes whatever. This is not in itself, however, a sufficient reason for denying that there is, or may be, such a thing. When we see effects *uniformly resulting*, we attribute them to the operation of some efficient agency. We begin with God himself, and apprehend his divine agency as the prime cause, and thence proceed, through all the different uniform phenomena, or results arising, which fall under our observation, apprehending some immediate efficient agency, which remains uniformly the same. This we call by various names; sometimes a *law*, sometimes a *constitution of God*, sometimes a principle: it is indeed of little consequence which."—*Ibid.*

There is no danger of misapprehending this language. "The prime cause" of these "effects *uniformly resulting*," is "divine agency." But there must be an "immediate" cause; and that is "a *constitution of God*." Thus Mr. D. denies that men are "inclined" to sin by "an innate propensity," for the purpose of attributing their vicious actions to "divine agency," operating by a divine "constitution."

Leaving the reader to decide, for himself, where this theory locates the blame of depravity, we pass on to remark, that it only varies and increases the difficulty arising out of the text under consideration. It presents the great Author of good as striving, by his Holy Spirit, to prevent depraved exercises, and at the same time acting as the prime agent in causing them. For the honour of God, we

would prefer the supposition, unphilosophical as it is, that these mysterious and powerful volitions are wholly uncaused.

Will it be said, that the term "flesh," as used in this text, has reference to the body and its appetites, and that the meaning is, that the Spirit, and the desires it originates, maintain an unsuccessful attempt to do good, on account of the opposition from the body? That would be to assert the doctrine of physical depravity to some purpose—to locate depravity in the animal nature.

But such an interpretation would be exploded by a parallel passage:—"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." Many of the works of the flesh, as stated here, are evidently mental exercises; plainly showing that the meaning of the term "flesh," when used as synonymous with the term depravity, is not to be restricted to the corporeal economy.

This text also shows, that "the flesh" is something distinct from mere voluntary action. It works, and these exercises are the "works of the flesh." The flesh and the works of the flesh are placed in opposition to the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit. The principle of interpretation which would resolve the flesh into voluntary exercises would make a similar disposal of the Spirit. In either case the interpretation would be absurd, because a voluntary action is itself a work. We should have the *works of the works* and the *fruits of the fruit*.

Again: the actual transgression of the law is denominated walking after the flesh in opposition to walking after the Spirit. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after flesh but after the Spirit." But if the depravity which the

word "flesh" represents, consists in walking, the apostle's language is unintelligible. It must be acknowledged to consist in an operative principle, to which actual transgression is referred, as its source.

Will it be pretended that the term "flesh" is used in these passages to denote our essential nature, including merely our original, constitutional faculties of body and mind, and not to any principle of depravity apart from them, and which may or may not adhere to them? That the term is frequently so used is not denied. But to suppose this to be its meaning, in the instances under consideration, would be to encounter greater difficulties than those intended to be avoided. "The flesh," we are told, "lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." Walking after the flesh is condemned. And we are notified that "they that are in Christ have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts," and that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." But is there any such irreconcilable hostility between our original constitution and the Holy Spirit? If He who created this constitution, and invested it with its original powers, approved of it, can it be at variance with his law, and invariably displeasing to him, for us to walk in accordance with that constitution? Must we "crucify," that is, do violence to our essential nature to secure the approbation of God? May we not, with the strictest accuracy, inquire whether sin does not consist in acting contrary to the laws of our original, essential constitution?

Whatever, then, may be the nature of human depravity, it evidently consists in something besides voluntary exercises.

Is it not presented in this light by those passages which personify it and style it "the old man?" "That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

and be renewed in the spirit of your mind," Eph. iv, 22. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin," Romans vi, 6. Here is a plain distinction between "the old man which is corrupt," and the "former conversation." To suppose that the old man signifies the former course of life, would be to make these expressions synonymous. The sense would then be, that ye put off concerning the *former conversation*, the *former conversation*. To the existence and life of the old man, actual transgression is evidently attributed, and the result of his being "crucified" is, that we do not "serve sin," that is, do not commit actual transgression.

Again : the doctrine that all depravity consists in voluntary exercises, is at variance with those scriptures which speak of depravity and holiness under the ideas of bondage and freedom. They constitute a numerous class. But what bondage to depravity can there be, if it consists altogether in voluntary exercises ? What greater freedom can a man have, at any time, than when he knows no constraint but his own volitions ?

It is also at variance with those inspired declarations which represent the Holy Spirit's influences as necessary to overcome and remove depravity. Any other means which suspend voluntary action will do the work as effectually. Let the most depraved man be put to sleep, and he is as free from depravity as the Saviour himself. This conclusion is as inevitable as it is absurd : unless we are required to believe that a man is engaged in voluntary and accountable action while he is asleep. And it would be a somewhat curious speculation to inquire, what would become of a man if he were to die in that condition, which is certainly a possible case. Would he go to heaven, or to hell ? If to the latter place, there would be the phenomenon of a man going to hell without any depravity.

CHAPTER VII.

DEPRAVITY CONTINUED.

THE doctrine which we oppose, evidently leads to a most antisciptural, absurd, and pernicious distinction between the moral character of the actor and his actions. If depravity consists solely in voluntary action, we have only to contemplate man as distinct from his actions, and no depravity can be affirmed of him. Depravity belongs to his actions, not to his person, or constitution. His actions may be depraved; but it does not follow that he is depraved. This consequence is so contrary to Scripture and reason, that one would suppose it sufficient to condemn the theory, in the estimate of all its advocates. But it is not. They have seen the consequence, and frequently asserted it. It is included in many of their statements of the doctrine. Mr. Duffield plainly asserts it, when he says, "We are infallibly directed, in making our estimate of human depravity, to have *exclusive* regard to the *acts* and *exercises* of the human soul." Here a distinction is made between the soul and its acts and exercises; and it is affirmed that, in making an estimate of depravity, the soul is to be excluded from the account, and the regard confined to its actions. Again: he says, "There shall take place *those acts*, of which *alone* we can predicate moral depravity." In his chapter on "the original of human depravity," he charges the advocates of the opposite doctrine with predicating depravity of "being," or "simple existence;" and affects to prove that it cannot be affirmed of "being;" and expresses his surprise "that it should be made a question, whether sin may be predicated of being, or simple existence." It would be silly enough, to be sure, to affirm depravity of simple, abstract being, for that would imply that *all* beings are depraved. But this his

opponents had not done. They had not even started the question which excites his surprise. They had affirmed depravity of *human beings*, and this is obviously the doctrine against which his objection is aimed. It is not to be wondered at, however, that he involves such a sentiment in the mists of ambiguity, by confounding a particular class of beings with *being* itself.

Mr. Finney says, "From this subject you can see that the wicked conduct of sinners is no proof *that their nature is sinful*." The author of "Views in Theology" affirms it broadly, when he says, "No depravity, taint, corruption, nor any other defect whatever of that nature, pertains to the constitution of man."

Mr. Barnes makes this distinction appear very conspicuous in his comment on St. Paul's declaration, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," &c., where he tells us that it does not mean "the *mind* itself, the intellect, or the will; it does not suppose that the *mind* or *soul* is physically depraved, or opposed to God." That it "does not mean that the *soul itself* is not subject to his law, but the *minding* of those things is hostile to his law."

It is not necessary to question the correctness of this criticism. The language of the apostle may signify "the *minding* of those things." But if he does not expressly predicate depravity and inability of the "mind itself," or "of man," in this place, he does in other places; and what he here says, clearly implies the depravity of the "mind itself," &c. Can that mind or soul be otherwise than depraved, which is constantly performing depraved actions? Can it be otherwise than at enmity with God, when all its intelligent, voluntary exercises are at enmity with him? But the effect of this comment is, obviously, to restrict, as a question of doctrine, the depravity and inability to the actions of the mind. It is adopted by New School writers, generally, to guard the doctrines of natural ability, and

depravity, as consisting solely in action, to which the text is equally fatal, whether it expressly affirms, or merely implies, that the “mind itself” is carnal, and at enmity with God.

We shall endeavour to make good our condemnation of this consequence, and the theory to which it belongs, by first bringing it in contact with the Scriptures. The apostle writes to the Philippians :—“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things.” Here depravity is predicated not only of *mind*ing earthly things, but of *those* who mind them—of the “mind itself”—the *man*—the *being*. The result of an attempt to conform this text to the doctrine, that depravity belongs solely to action, would be strikingly ludicrous. Again: the apostle says to the Corinthians, “Are *ye* not carnal, and walk as men?” How ridiculous would be the attempt to interpret this text on the theory which predicates depravity solely of action!

This theory is most unequivocally contradicted by the reasonings of the Saviour, on human actions and their causes :—“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but *inwardly* they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them,” Matt. vii. The purport of this reasoning is, plainly, that acts and exercises derive their moral quality from the moral qualities of the actor, and likewise furnish the criterion by which his moral principles are to be judged. Are the actions de-

praved? It follows that the source of them is depraved. Is the man depraved? Then will his actions be depraved. What a glaring discrepancy there is between the oracles of Christ, and the speculations of these theorists, who, with the New Testament in their hands, and professing to be servants and ministers of Christ, tell us that "there is nothing *in man* which constitutes a tendency to sin"—"which forms any more certainty or probability that he will exercise that species of action which is *evil*, than that which is morally excellent"—and that "sinful actions do not imply a sinful nature."

The Saviour furnishes a severe rebuke to this inconsistency, in his reply to those who attributed his casting out devils to the agency of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. After showing the absurdity of their charge, he says,—
"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers! *how can ye, being evil*, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things."

Who does not perceive that the doctrine and distinction which we oppose, destroy the Saviour's maxim, "The tree is known by its fruits," and contradict all his reasonings? They make the evil quality pertain exclusively to the fruit. They are at variance with the whole tenor of Scripture, which constantly affirms depravity of man, and contemplates it as the source of his evil actions.

Apply this distinction to the perpetrator of crime, in any of its varied forms, and while it predicates depravity of his actions, it leaves himself without condemnation. Take, for instance, the manufacturer and trafficker in ardent spirits as a drink who is fully apprized of all the mischief

he is doing. His business may be pronounced immoral, but it does not follow that he is immoral or depraved. The immorality belongs exclusively to the business. This distinction was actually so applied, and this doctrine maintained, in the Pennsylvania Temperance Convention in the spring of 1835, by one of the authors referred to in this work, in the debate on the resolution asserting the immorality of the manufacture and sale of ardent spirits as a drink.

According to this doctrine we have only to contemplate the murderer apart from his actions, and we must pronounce him perfectly free from depravity. Let his voluntary exercises be suspended by sleep, for instance, and this is undeniably the case. Let him die in this condition, and he dies free from depravity, although the blood may yet reek on his murderous blade. Or let him wake from his sleep, and whether he has any depravity after he wakes, or not, will depend on his voluntarily performing depraved exercises, which he has a natural ability to decline. This is a specimen of the moral philosophy which grows out of New School theology.

It has been objected to this theory, that it is at variance with the doctrine of total depravity, and its advocates have endeavoured to remove the objection. One thing, however is certain, that it admits of no such thing as *partial* depravity. There must either be total depravity or none at all; for as the depravity of a man consists solely in his actions, his present action must, at any given period of his life, constitute his present depravity. Whether it be total or partial, will depend on, whether the volition is partially or wholly at variance with the law which it transgresses. Now the volitions of the mind are successive, and no matter how rapidly they may succeed each other, the mind puts forth but one volition at a time. Whether that volition is partially in obedience to, and partially at variance

with, the law, will depend on the law itself. If the law partly enjoins, and partly forbids it, this will be the case. But such a supposition respecting the law of God would be absurd. It would make it grossly contradictory. But if the law is totally at variance with the unholy volition, it must constitute total depravity. The moment there is the least variation from total depravity, it is totally absent.

If it be objected to this reasoning, that one single totally depraved action does not constitute total depravity, we would ask how many such actions are necessary to constitute it?

Perhaps it will be said, that it is not every unholy volition that constitutes total depravity. If there be some particular volitions of which alone total depravity can be predicated, it will be necessary to know what they are, in order to determine whether an individual be totally depraved or not, as his character in this respect will depend on his having performed or declined them.

Take this theory of depravity then, along with the doctrine of natural ability, from which it springs, and it will follow infallibly, that a man may change from total depravity to holiness, and from holiness to total depravity, twenty times a day, and as much oftener as he pleases.

But the great and crowning objection is, that it *denies human depravity altogether*. It has been shown, by the authority of Scripture, that it consists in something *in man*, to which sinful voluntary exercises are referred as their source; and the popular and prevailing apprehensions of mankind are in accordance with the philosophy of Scripture. Now, if depravity does not consist in some quality, principle, propensity, or disposition, belonging to the actor, which may be contemplated apart from his actions, and which operates as the cause of his putting forth unholy, instead of holy exercises, *it will follow, inevitably,*

that there is nothing in man which makes it probable that he will pursue one course of moral action rather than another. Suppose two men sleeping, or in a state of suspended animation. According to this doctrine, there is nothing in either of these men, no matter what their previous character and conduct may have been, on which we are authorized to build the slightest calculation as to what course they will pursue when they are awake, or restored. This consequence, sufficient, one would suppose, to condemn any theory which could be shown to lead to it, or involve it, is not only fairly deducible from the premises, but is actually adopted, and made a part of the theory in which it originates. It is broadly asserted in the quotation with which we closed the fifth chapter.

Let us proceed to test it by the common sense and universal practice of mankind. Suppose one of these men to be a useful and unexceptionable minister of the gospel; and the other a vile penitentiary convict, who has escaped, by united force and treachery, from his prison. One is now just as far from depravity as the other. And were this theory correct, we should do the convict an injury by withholding from him the confidence which we award to the minister. Why? Because it would be withheld on the supposition that there is something in him—something *belonging to his mind*—something apart from his actions—some disposition, propensity, or taste, which renders it highly probable, if not certain, that he will, if he has opportunity, take improper liberties with the rights and property of others, when he begins to act again.

But will the teachers of New Divinity undertake to persuade the community that there is nothing in the thief which constitutes a tendency to thieving?—nothing which forms any more certainty or probability that he will act dishonestly, than that he will act with the most scrupulous honesty?—that it would be doing injustice to him, to deny

him the confidence we award to those whose integrity has never been questioned? Do not men universally act on the opposite principle? Are we not constantly selecting our society, and pronouncing our judgments, on the ground that men possess various moral principles, apart from, and anterior to, their acting, which lay the foundation of probability that they will act honourably or dishonourably, virtuously or viciously, when placed under certain circumstances? Would the merchant as soon trust his merchandise to the noted swindler as to the man of tried honesty? This new-fashioned theory of depravity is a perfect outrage on common sense and universal experience. It is a wholesale denial of human depravity, as it is generally understood.

Will it be argued, that *habit* makes the difference in question?—that one man has contracted habits of dishonesty, and that this is the cause of his acting viciously? There can be no doubt that habit has a very powerful influence on volition; but this solution, if admitted, would be as fatal to the doctrine that all depravity consists in voluntary exercises, as it would to the doctrine of an hereditary and constitutional propensity. It places habit “back” of moral exercises, and assigns it as their cause. Besides, habit is something which affects the faculties—the constitution of man. It is something which belongs to him, and abides with him, sleeping and waking. If, therefore, we resolve depravity into habit, we make it to consist in something *in man*, which is distinct from, and the cause of, depraved action.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEPRAVITY CONTINUED.

WERE the Scriptures silent on the subject, a strong presumption in favour of the doctrine of inherent and constitutional depravity would arise, from the acknowledged facts that the first moral exercises of every individual of our race are vicious—and that their actions continue to be vicious, until depravity is arrested in its course by the power of grace. How does it happen that the “children of men go astray from the womb, speaking lies?” How shall we account for this universal transgression of the law of God, commencing with the first accountable act, without admitting an innate principle of depravity?

It is said, in reply, that there is no more difficulty in accounting for this universal wickedness, without supposing an innate principle of depravity, than there is in accounting for the sinning of our first ancestors without it. But the cases are widely different. Adam sinned *once* without it, under circumstances of powerful temptation, after having lived for some time in perfect obedience. Now *all* men sin *constantly*, and from the *beginning*. There is no obedience to God until regeneration takes place. The task then is not that of accounting for one single sinful volition without previous depravity—a task not without its difficulties—but for a long and unbroken series of volitions, all in a wrong direction, commencing with the individual’s first accountable exercise: and all this in despite of powerful opposing influences, and the strongest motives to the contrary course.

But strong as this argument is, we are not dependant upon it. The Scriptures, as we have seen, settle the question most decisively; and we prefer to rest our convictions on their decision.

It is contended by the advocates of New Divinity, that, if depravity consists not merely in voluntary action—if it affects the constitution of the actor, it must be a *faculty*—an essential *attribute*—a part of our constitution, &c. The objection is presented in an endless variety of phraseology, all, however, conveying the same idea.

That depravity does not consist solely in action, has, we think, been clearly shown. It is equally clear that it is not a faculty—an essential attribute of our nature—a part of our constitution. The true doctrine lies somewhere between these extreme points.

But the doctrine which we have advanced does not lead to the consequence alleged. There is no necessity for adopting the voluntary exercise theory, in order to escape it. Depravity may be something which inheres in the soul, and constitutes a principle of action, without constituting a faculty of the soul. This position may be illustrated by a reference to bodily disease, on which the inspired writers rely for their most striking illustrations of depravity. There is a remarkable analogy between them. But who will maintain that bodily disease consists solely in action—that the *body itself* is not diseased? To maintain such a supposition, would be to present to our contemplation the phenomenon of a healthy body in constantly diseased action. Disease not only deranges the action of the bodily organs, but affects the organs themselves. The body itself is diseased; and yet no one supposes that the disease is a faculty of the body—that it is a part of the bodily constitution. The body had all its parts and attributes previous to its becoming diseased. It has them all after the disease is removed. The difference between its past and present condition, is this: then, it was diseased, and was disqualified for vigorous action, or wholly disabled; now, it is sound, and capable of the appropriate and vigorous exertion of all its faculties.

So it is with depravity. It is something which inheres in our moral constitution, and causes a deranged action of its powers ; but it is not a faculty—it is not an essential attribute—it is not a part of the constitution. Remove it, and the soul has the same faculties and constituents it had before. The difference caused, is simply this : the soul is relieved of a bias, a propensity, which disqualified it for obedience to God, and held its powers in thralldom to vice.

Again : there are bodily diseases which are called constitutional. They are supposed to be transmitted from parents to children, and yet no one pretends to consider them a part of the constitution. The objection depends for all its plausibility on the ambiguity of the term *constitutional*. Indeed, ambiguous terms are the weapons of New Divinity warfare. They constitute its heaviest artillery. That which is a part of the constitution is certainly constitutional ; but it does not follow, that whatever is constitutional must therefore be a part of the constitution.

But the overwhelming objection to our view of depravity is, that it teaches the doctrine of “physical depravity.” Numerous statements of the doctrine are quoted, and commented upon, by different New School writers, and the conclusion is brandished with formidable menace, that “the doctrine taught is that of physical depravity.” It is supposed that it is thus reduced to an absurdity. The term “physical” occurs with endless reiteration in the arguments of New Divinity, and seems to be relied on as possessing some magic influence, before which, opposition is expected to cower.

It is not characteristic of truth to be terrified by a word. We shall therefore venture to encounter this awful trisyllable. The term “physical” is ambiguous, and this is the secret of its importance. It is sometimes used as synony-

mous with material or corporeal, and in other instances to signify whatever belongs essentially to the constitution of our whole nature. The advocates of the theory of depravity which we oppose, make it represent every thing except voluntary action. They insist upon it, that depravity must consist solely in voluntary action, or it is physical. These are, with them, the only alternatives. Now it is plain, that whether we teach the doctrine of physical depravity or not, will depend on the definition of the term, which may be adopted. If we take it in the sense in which these controversialists use it, we must of course adopt their theory, or submit to be stigmatized as holding the doctrine of physical depravity.

But, how is it that this phrase comes to be so revolting? Why do we shrink from the charge of holding and teaching the doctrine of physical depravity? Some of the ancient philosophers held, that depravity resides altogether in the corporeal constitution—that matter is essentially and incurably corrupt, and that all the moral aberrations of the soul are to be attributed to its connection with matter. Another theory of physical depravity, we are told, represents it as “an essential attribute of the soul”—“a created attribute of its substance, inhering in, and contributing to make up its nature, and constitute it what it is.”

Now these theories of depravity are justly condemned. We have not advanced either of them. If the term “physical depravity” be restricted to them, we have not approximated to the doctrine. But it has acquired, in the hands of New Divinity, a new signification. Yet, if we must bear the terrible odium inflicted upon us, we bear it in good company. We have shown that the doctrine thus stigmatized is the doctrine of the inspired writers; and we are sure of this, that, if St. Paul were living, these modern theologians might assail him with the word “physi-

cal" until their organs of speech should fail, or their resources of ink become exhausted, and he would not move an inch from his position.

But, taking the term "physical" in the sense of our opponents, we cannot see but that they are as deeply involved in the difficulty of teaching a physical depravity as ourselves. If every faculty of our constitution be physical, and, likewise, every inherent principle to which our actions are referred as their cause, will not all our actions be physical? It will not alter the case, that some of our actions are under the control of the will, and therefore voluntary; for the will itself is a physical attribute. They may be called *moral*, but the designation will serve only to distinguish one class of physical actions from another—that which is voluntary from that which is involuntary. The truth is this: the charge of physical depravity, in the hands of these men, is a mere bugbear. It is retorted upon them with the utmost ease. Moreover, we find examples in which they assert the doctrine of "physical depravity" in a sense in which we utterly reject it. Mr. Barnes says, in his note on Romans vii, 23, "The body is composed of many members; and as the flesh is regarded as the source of sin, (verse 18,) the law of sin is said to be in the members, that is, in the body itself." This is physical depravity, unquestionably. The "source of sin," the "law of sin," is in "*the body itself*." To this frightful extremity is Mr. B. pushed, in his efforts to interpret the oracles of God in accordance with the doctrine, that the "soul itself" is not depraved.

These writers are chargeable with an inconsistency in the use of language, which deserves a moment's notice. They are constantly writing about the "physical nature," the "physical constitution" of man. We are incessantly notified by them, that depravity does not belong to the "physical constitution." But, if every thing which be-

longs in any way to man's constitution be physical, what other nature or constitution can he have? They may as well write about *human* men and women, as about man's "physical nature," if he has no other nature. But, if the nature, or constitution of man, may be distinguished into physical and moral, as such phraseology implies, their objection to our doctrine of depravity is entirely obviated by our affirming it of the moral constitution. Mr. Duffield speaks of the "moral constitution," but with great inconsistency. What he means, it would be difficult to determine, unless he considers a voluntary act to be a constitution.

CHAPTER IX.

HOLINESS.

IT has been shown that the doctrine of the natural ability of fallen man to obey God leads to the doctrine that all depravity consists in voluntary action, and that this doctrine is adopted and inculcated by the advocates of this system. It requires no argument to show that this view of depravity necessarily implies the doctrine that *all holiness consists in voluntary exercises*.

This view of the nature of holiness they have likewise adopted. The attention of the reader is asked to a few citations in proof of this assertion.

Mr. Finney, in his sermon on "Sinners bound to change their own hearts," denies that regeneration effects any change in the constitution, or implants a new principle or taste in the soul which may be characterized as *holy*. He says,—

"All holiness in God, angels, or men, must be voluntary, or it is not holiness. To call any thing that is a part

of the mind or body, holy—to speak of a holy substance, unless it be in a figurative sense, is to talk nonsense. Holiness is virtue; it is something that is praiseworthy; it cannot therefore be a part of the created substance of body or mind, but must consist in *voluntary obedience* to the principles of eternal righteousness.”—p. 7.

Again:—“For instance, when Adam was first created, and awoke into being, before he had obeyed or disobeyed his Maker, he could have had no moral character at all: he had exercised no affections, no desires, nor put forth any actions. In this state he was a complete moral agent, and in this respect in the image of his Maker, but as yet could have no moral character; for moral character cannot be a subject of creation, but attaches to voluntary action.”

Mr. Duffield, speaking of the graces of the Spirit, says, “Now all these are voluntary acts and exercises of the human mind.”

“It is philosophy, based on a false physiology, which comes in and says, the Spirit secures the exercise of these graces by infusing grace, or by putting into the soul a principle of life, or by creating a disposition for holiness, which principle or disposition is the immediate cause of these holy exercises of mind and heart, technically called the graces of the Spirit.”—p. 230.

Again:—“Some vague and mystic notions are had about disposition and habit as the proper philosophical cause of holy exercises. This philosophical cause of holy acts and exercises is itself pronounced holy, as every cause, it is supposed, must possess the same quality or character with its effects; and in the production, or communication, or lodgment, or creation of this causal something, this disposition or habit in the human soul, by the Spirit of God, it is alleged consists regeneration. Power is thus given to the regenerate man to perform holy acts,

and thus the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit is resolved into a mere physical efficiency! And all the passages of Scripture which speak of his power in this connection are explained by means of this philosophical invention.”—p. 511.

Again:—“But do not tell us that the Spirit introduces into the heart a *vital principle* or sense, a *spiritual instinct* or *holy principle*, to be the *immediate cause* and formal reason of *holy acts*, laid by creative power in the *nature* of the soul.”—p. 226.

And in another place he says, “But we may know and trace the immediate effects of his (the Spirit’s) agency, *inasmuch as they all lie in our voluntary acts and exercises*, of which we are distinctly conscious.”—p. 439.

He meets with a difficulty in the alleged holiness of Jesus Christ while in his infant state, and concludes that the holiness which characterized him at that time, must have been of a different kind from that which he afterward possessed.

“If holiness is attributed to that nature in its unborn and embryo state, we certainly cannot suppose that it is in the *same sense* in which it was after its growth into youth and manhood, or else we must suppose that holiness as a personal characteristic consists in something irrespective of the acts and exercises of a moral being. For the holiness of a being, with its powers developed, and actively excited, must be very different from that of one yet destitute of such powers.”

The holiness which Mr. D. attributes to Jesus Christ in his “embryo state,” in order to escape the alternative of admitting that “holiness is a personal characteristic,” and consists in something which may exist antecedent to the voluntary “acts and exercises of a moral being,” is such as is attributed to inanimate things—for instance, to the vessels and apartments of the temple. These were

holy in the sense of being “*set apart* as permanently and exclusively appropriate to God. In this sense the yet unconscious nature of Christ may be denominated holy.”—p. 353.

On page five hundred and eighteen, he grants that “holy exercises” must be referred to some cause, but denies that the cause is to be found “in the soul itself,” or that it is “some disposition, or habit, or causal something in the very being.” He ascribes all the causation to exterior influences—to the “Holy Spirit” operating on “*our constitutional susceptibilities* by means of the truths and facts of Scripture,” the holy exercises taking their character of holiness, not from any internal principle of holiness in the actor, but from the character of the “objects exciting and eliciting them.”

He argues that the doctrine of an inherent principle of holiness in the soul, operating as the cause of holy exercises, “robs the Spirit of his glory,” and obscures “his immediate influence.” “Shall we,” says he, “thrust the Spirit back, lose sight of his grace, and attribute to him the mere exercise of creative power in this marvellous work of converting and sanctifying the soul? Shall we give glory to the renovated man, and inflate him with pride, by leading him to believe that a certain act of God has lodged in him a *cause of holy exercises*?”—pp. 229–231.

It is not our intention to argue at length the falsity of this doctrine. Our main object in bringing it into notice is to show that it is a part of the system to which we impute it. Besides, if we have succeeded in refuting the premises from which it is deduced, it falls to the ground as a matter of course. Nevertheless, we can scarcely resist the temptation to discredit it, by adverting to some of the contradictions in which it involves its advocates.

Mr. D., as we have seen, contends that holiness does not consist in a “disposition” or “principle” in the soul,

operating as "the cause of holy exercises," but in holy exercises themselves, which are caused solely by influences external to the actor. He tells us, p. 516, "That the graces of the Spirit are not *created causes per se*, but *habitual voluntary exercises* induced by his efficacious influence through the truths and facts of revelation." But in the very same paragraph he exalts these "voluntary exercises" into "affections" and "principles of action," and ascribes to these "affections" and "principles of action," the causal influence, the existence of which he has taken so much pains to disprove. "These," says he, "are all manifestly different affections, which depend originally on our natural and constitutional susceptibilities, and as excited and elicited by the Spirit's exhibition of the objects and truths appropriate to this end, *assume an impulsive influence*, and *secure those acts and exercises which we call holy*." And at the conclusion of the paragraph he says, "*Love, repentance, faith, hope, and fear*, are, in their first rise, affections, excited and elicited by appropriate objects, and becoming habitual, they assume such a permanent influence on conduct and character, as to be denominated *the principles of Christian action*."

Here, then, we are instructed that these "holy acts and exercises," which have no cause in the soul itself, are "affections" and "principles of action," which "assume *an impulsive influence*, and *secure those acts and exercises which we call holy*"—that is, if the language used has any meaning, the holy acts and exercises which have no cause in the soul "assume an impulsive influence," become principles of action, and *cause*, or in other words, "secure" themselves.

Let it be observed, that the question is not how holiness is produced by its great Author, whether by "creation," or "infusion," or "implantation," or by "exciting and eliciting" it by the exhibition of truth; but, what is its na-

ture when produced. Does it consist solely in "voluntary exercises" of the natural faculties, or does it include principles of action in the soul of the holy being, to which these voluntary exercises may be referred, as a real and indispensable, though secondary cause? Mr. D. has obviously contradicted himself by first denying the existence of a cause of holy actions in the soul, and affirming that holiness consists wholly in voluntary exercises, and then attributing holy exercises to *affections* and *principles* of Christian action "which assume an *impulsive influence*, and *secure* those *acts and exercises* which we call *holy*," unless he really intended to affirm the absurdity that the holy exercises *cause themselves*.

But it becomes us not to rejoice too soon, as though we had taken great spoil. It is not an easy matter to hold these slippery logicians when we have caught them. Although our author finds it convenient, for some reason, to refer good actions to affections and principles, as their cause, we are not to suppose that he intends to abide by this doctrine. He has already defined *affections* to be nothing more than voluntary acts and exercises, and he proceeds to give a similar explanation of the term "principle." He says, in the succeeding paragraph, "The intelligent reader will perceive at once in what sense we understand the word *principle*,—not as designating 'something' *laid* in the very structure of the being, nor a super-added *quality* of the soul, nor a *specific cause of holy exercises*, lodged in the heart by the creative power of God, anterior to such exercises; but the determining or regulating influence of any particular species of feeling, as continuously or frequently and readily excited and elicited by the presentation of some object or truth, appropriately operating on our constitutional susceptibilities."

We are here notified that he does not mean by the word principle "a specific cause of holy exercises." What,

then, does he mean? He means "the determining or regulating influences of any particular species of feeling." But again we are in difficulties. We must look upon this influence of feeling, or the feeling to which the influence belongs, which he identifies with principle, either as a cause of voluntary action, and therefore distinct from voluntary action, or as a voluntary action merely. If it be viewed in the former light, he has fairly entitled himself to the imputation of having uttered a gross contradiction. If in the latter, we beg him to accept our congratulations for the sagacity by which he made the important discovery, that all voluntary exercises are caused by voluntary exercises, and that some of them, at least, must cause themselves.

But why does he pursue this course? Why maintain that holiness consists altogether in voluntary exercises, and then attribute these holy exercises to holy affections and principles as their cause, and then again define affections and principles to be nothing more than voluntary exercises? Because, while the theory of divinity which he and his coadjutors have adopted, requires of them that they maintain the first position, common sense, the philosophy, the language, the laws, the jurisprudence, of all civilized communities, attribute virtuous or vicious actions to virtuous or vicious innate principles as their source; and they are sometimes, in the course of their doctrinal discussions, placed in such positions that they must conform to this universal judgment, or appear obviously and undisguisedly arrayed against it. To avoid this inconvenience, they adopt the language which conveys the popular sentiment, and then interpret, so as to harmonize it with their theory. This is the course they pursue in arguing out their views of the nature of depravity, as well as of the nature of holiness. They are often compelled to contradict themselves by using language which implies

the very opposite of that which they are endeavouring to maintain. Affections, dispositions, and principles, are spoken of as the sources of voluntary action. But the reader need not misapprehend them, for they are careful to redeem themselves by resolving all affections, dispositions, and principles of moral action into voluntary exercises.

We will here cite an example of the manner in which the word "disposition" is explained, that our readers may be on their guard when it is used in their discourses or writings on this subject:—"It is *philosophy*," says Mr. D., "that talks of some peculiar adaptation of created nature, that is the specific *cause* of those acts and exercises which, as they are strung together in a series, or become habitual, we denominate *disposition*."—p. 458.

Again: "We use it commonly to denote any particular class of acts and exercises toward given objects as they operate on our constitutional capacities and susceptibilities, and not as efficient causes *per se*, lodged in the structure of the soul, or superadded to its properties."—*Ibid*.

Let it be remembered, then, when they refer actions to "dispositions," as they often do, that they mean nothing more by "dispositions" than "acts and exercises as they are strung together in a series," or "any particular class of acts and exercises." They have in some instances resolved the "heart" itself into voluntary action.

Another advantage is gained by this mode of operation. When their orthodoxy is called in question, they can readily adjust themselves to the measure of opposite standards. They can agree with one side or the other, as the emergency requires; and by bringing their mental juggling to bear on a well selected vocabulary of ambiguous terms, they can undertake to convince an Old School Calvinist, in one hour, that there are but shades of difference in their doctrinal views, and then turn around, and in

the next hour, hope to convince the Methodist that they hold his doctrines precisely.

We will leave it to our readers to estimate the services rendered to literature and philosophy, by a theological system which is compelled, for its own support, to confound *voluntary acts* of the mind with *principles* of action.

There is one objection urged against the Scriptural view of the nature of holiness on which we propose to bestow a moment's attention. It is urged with equal plausibility against the Scriptural doctrines of the nature of regeneration and depravity. It is, that a constitutional change, by which the regenerate man is supposed to have communicated to him a new principle of action, would destroy his *identity*.

This objection is based on the assumption that whatever is constitutional must be an essential part of the constitution. If this be the case, there can be no such thing as constitutional diseases, for no one would contend that disease is an essential part of the constitution of the human body. Our principal object, however, in noticing the objection is, to compare it with the doctrine of the resurrection of the human body. The change which is to take place in the bodies of the saints will be constitutional, if a constitutional change be possible. They are to be invested with new principles; to be adapted to the occupancy of new elements, and to new modes of existence. But if their identity is not preserved, there is no resurrection. The objection tends, therefore, to the destruction of the glorious doctrine of the resurrection of the human body.

The doctrine respecting the nature of holiness which we have charged on the theory of modern Calvinism, is thus asserted by the Christian Spectator, Vol. iii, No. 3, p. 473: "Holiness can no more be created in the soul than sin. It is, and must be, *voluntary action*, the free choice

of the agent, or wants that which is essential to the nature of holiness." This is the doctrine advanced by Dr. Taylor, *the Socinian*, in the work reviewed by Mr. Wesley in his treatise on Original Sin.

CHAPTER X.

CHARACTER OF INFANTS.

THE doctrine that all depravity and holiness consists of voluntary action, leads directly to the doctrine, that infants have no moral character—are neither holy nor depraved. The passage from one doctrine to the other is short. If depravity and holiness consist wholly in voluntary and accountable action, and infants are incapable of such action, they can neither have the one nor the other.

One or two examples will be sufficient to show that this doctrine also is held and taught.

Mr. Finney, in his sermon on *Why sinners hate God*, says, "Perhaps some one will object and say, If sinners are not born with a sinful nature, how then are they saved by grace? But I ask in return, If they *are* born with a sinful nature, how are they saved by grace? Does God create an infant a sinner, and then call it grace to save him from the sinfulness of a nature of his own creation? Absurd and blasphemous."—p. 156.

Again: "But let us look at this. Here are two systems; the *one* maintains that infants have no moral character at all until they have committed actual transgression—that their first moral actions are universally sinful, but that previous to moral action they are neither sinful nor holy—that, as they have no moral character, they deserve neither praise nor blame; neither life nor death at the hand of God; God might annihilate them without in-

justice, or he may bestow upon them eternal life as a free and unearned gift. The *other* system maintains that infants have a sinful nature, which they have inherited from Adam.”—*Ibid.*

He proceeds to argue against the latter system, and in the course of the argument places his own system in contrast with it. “But let us look,” he says, “at the other system for a moment. This denies that infants have a sinful nature, and rejects the *monstrous dogma*, that God has created the nature sinful, and then pretends to save the infant from a nature of his own creation by *grace*, as if the infant deserved damnation for being what God made it.”—p. 157.

Mr. Duffield develops his views on the subject in the following manner: “Our object is simply an observation of facts, as far as they tend to shape or affect the future moral character of the child. We say *future*, for it is a question alike pertinent and important, whether in the *incipient* period of *infancy* and *childhood* there can be *any moral character* whatever possessed.”

We are not left in the dark as to the side which he takes on this “question alike pertinent and important.” He proceeds to explain what constitutes moral character. “Moral character,” he says, “is acquired by acts of a moral nature. Moral acts are those acts which are contemplated by the law, prescribing the rule of conduct. It is not every act we perform that is a moral act.” And the conclusion to which he comes is thus stated: “Such being the case, that many actions possess altogether an indifferent character, and some do not even fall under the cognizance of the law of God—and that too in adults, where the capacities for moral action are fully developed—it is obvious that in infancy and incipient childhood, where none of the actions are deliberate, or the result of motive, operating in connection with the knowledge of

law, and of the great end of all human actions, *no moral character can appropriately be predicated.*”—pp. 377, 378.

We shall not take up time in urging the objection with which Mr. Finney affects to grapple—that infants, if this theory be true, will not be saved *by grace*; but we do invite a moment's attention to the unfairness with which he treats it. He undertakes to retort the objection. But, that his confident retort may appear plausible, he grossly misrepresents the theory of his opponents. He directs his argument against the supposition that God *creates* the infant a sinner. But who maintains this opinion? That this misrepresentation was intentional, appears probable from the fact, that immediately before and after his retort, he states the orthodox tenet as it is, that infants “are *born* with a sinful nature; that they have a sinful nature which they have *inherited from Adam.*” Let him show, if he can, that there is no grace in saving infants from a depravity which is not supposed to be *created*, but naturally *inherited*. He also overlooks the principal meaning which the term grace is intended to convey—that of supernatural influence—and thus evades the force of the objection.

There is another objection, however, with which he was doubtless acquainted, but which he declines introducing to the notice of his readers, at least in this sermon. It is this: If infants have no moral character, they are, dying in infancy, ineligible to admission either into heaven or hell. Nothing can enter heaven but what is perfectly holy; and if they are sent to hell they must be damned without either depravity or personal transgression, since both holiness and depravity are said to consist in voluntary exercises, of which they are incapable. Mr. F. no doubt had his eye on this difficulty when he said, “God might annihilate them without injustice, or he may bestow upon them eternal life as a free and unearned gift.” But the difficulty is not their destitution of *merit*—their not having

earned eternal life ; but their destitution of *holiness*. If he admits them into heaven, they must enter “without holiness.” But if God cannot create holiness in the soul, as they have assured us, and as none can enter heaven without it, their exclusion is inevitable.

It need not excite wonder if they should conclude that the best way of disposing of this objection, is that of maintaining silence respecting it. But it is not to be supposed that such daring speculators would suffer themselves to be pent in by it, without contriving some way of escape. Some have found relief by conceding that infants have a moral character, while, to avoid the necessity of admitting that holiness and depravity include more than voluntary action, they have adopted the theory that voluntary and accountable action commences at the time of birth—that “mankind are literally *at birth* voluntary and accountable agents, and *actual* sinners against God—that the new-born infant is a responsible subject of God’s moral government.”

We shall not attempt to refute this incredible proposition by entering upon the philosophical inquiries to which it might lead, but by bringing into view one or two of its theological aspects merely. Suppose this doctrine, for the sake of argument, to be true, we are placed in this dilemma : either *all* infants, from the period of their birth to the termination of infancy, voluntarily and constantly exert their powers of moral agency in obedience to the law of God, and thus secure their final salvation in case they die in infancy ; or, falling into sin, and under the condemnation of the divine law, they are liable, even in earliest infancy, to the damnation of hell. Moreover, if this doctrine be true, we cannot see why infants may not commence their existence with “holy exercises,” and persevere, and so present millions of exceptions to that doctrine of our Saviour, which affirms the universal necessity of the new birth.

We close this chapter by remarking that the reader will be able to see, in the light of these investigations, what is meant by many of the preachers and writers of New Divinity, when they so emphatically affirm that all are born "destitute of holiness." It is meant, that they are born without a moral character of any kind. They are, according to this theory, born as destitute of depravity as they are of holiness.

CHAPTER XI.

REGENERATION.

ANOTHER consequence resulting from the doctrines which have been reviewed is, *that a voluntary change of will or purpose, merely, or a choice, or resolution, or determination to be a Christian, or a change in the character of the voluntary exercises, is sufficient to constitute regeneration.* This is plain. If depravity does not consist in a principle, or disposition, or propensity, or taste, or corruption of our nature, or any thing which "lies back of the will," or is anterior to our voluntary exercises, or is the cause of them, —if it is in no sense constitutional—if it consists wholly in being unwilling to obey God, or in wrong voluntary exercises, which we have shown to be the case if the doctrine of natural ability be true, an unregenerate man has only to choose, or purpose, or resolve, or make up his mind, or become willing to serve God and be a Christian—to commence a new course of voluntary exercises, which he has a natural ability to do at any time, and all his depravity is gone. He is regenerated. He is a Christian. No other change is necessary.

This consequence, also, is adopted, and figures prominently in the doctrinal exhibitions of New Divinity. Dr.

Lansing says, at the close of his sermon, "On the Inability of Sinners Voluntary," p. 154, "Our subject corrects an error into which some have fallen, on the great doctrine of regeneration. Sinners are called on to see and hear with the eyes and ears they have. They are not commanded to make them eyes and ears that they may see and hear. Thence we learn what we are to understand by the requisition of God through the prophet, 'Make you a new heart.' Not a new principle of action, a new taste. Not alter the physical constitution. God has made this just as he would have it. Man is now all that it is necessary he should be to render it proper or consistent to affirm praise or blame of him. Sinners can do right if they please, without a physical change. A *moral* change is necessary; but a moral change is *nothing more than a change of will, or purpose, or inclination*; and it is this change that God, by the mouth of his prophet, commands the sinner to operate for himself, when he says, 'Make you a new heart and a new spirit.' 'Cleanse your hearts, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.'" Here he not only inculcates the doctrine that "a change of will, purpose, or inclination," constitutes regeneration, but plainly denies that it includes any thing more. He denies, specifically, that it consists in a change affecting the constitution, or the principles or sources of voluntary action.

Mr. Duffield, in his work on Regeneration, maintains that it consists solely in a change of will or voluntary exercises, and denies that it originates in the soul a new principle, to which holy exercises may be referred as their source. He refers to Dr. Witherspoon as expressing correct views on the subject, in opposition to those of Dr. Owen and others:—"Dr. Witherspoon, on the one hand, in his valuable practical treatise on regeneration, at the very commencement, pronounces the Scriptural phrases,

‘being born again,’ ‘the new creature,’ ‘his workmanship,’ &c., to be metaphorical, thus evidently denying there is a literal or real creation.

“He does indeed speak of an ‘inward and essential change,’ but it is very evident that he does not, by these terms, denote *any other change* than may be traced in the *voluntary exercises*; for he considers that it may be as appropriately designated by repentance as by regeneration.”—p. 213.

Again: “He does not pretend to ‘prove, or assert the existence of a *principle of life*, or any thing else, *back of* the voluntary exercises themselves, *as the cause* or origin of that holiness without which no man can see the Lord.’” —*Ibid.*

Again: “It is going altogether beyond the analogy in the case, to assert that there is in regeneration the injection, infusion, or implantation, or creation of *a new principle of spiritual life*.”—p. 204.

Again: “It is philosophy, based on a false physiology, which comes in and says the Spirit secures the exercise of these graces *by infusing grace, or by putting into the soul a principle of life, or by creating a disposition for holiness*, which principle or disposition is the *immediate cause* of those holy exercises of mind and heart, technically called the graces of the Spirit.”—p. 230.

Again: “But we may know and trace the immediate effects of his, the ‘Spirit’s’ agency, inasmuch as *they all lie in our voluntary acts and exercises*.”—p. 439.

Again: “That the Spirit of God is the author of regeneration, is not denied by those who speak of it as the *commencement* of a change in the character of our *voluntary exercises*. Whether that change is the result of a creative act of God’s physical power,—terminating on our constitutional capacities and susceptibilities; or consists in the substitution or succession of *new exercises* of these

capacities and susceptibilities, the exercises taking their character from the objects and motives inducing them, are questions which have been already answered.”—p. 480.

Again : “ Some vague and mystic notions are had about *disposition* and *habit*, as the proper philosophical cause of *holy acts and exercises*. This philosophical cause of holy acts and exercises is itself pronounced holy ; as every cause, it is thought, must possess the same quality or character with its effects ; and in the production, or communication, or lodgment, or creation of this *causal* ‘ something,’ this *disposition* or *habit* in the human soul, by the Spirit of God, it is alleged consists regeneration. Power is thus given to the regenerate man to perform holy acts, and thus the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit is resolved into a mere physical efficiency ! And all the passages of Scripture which speak of his power in this connection, are explained by means of this *philosophical invention* ! ”—p. 511.

The author of “ Views in Theology ” says, “ But it will perhaps be asked, ‘ Admitting that the Divine Spirit employs motives as an instrument in renovating the mind ; still, after all, does he not do something more than merely bring a moral influence to bear on it ? ’ What more ? What more is necessary to be done ? What more can be done ? No physical change, as has been shown, is requisite ; *nothing needs to be accomplished*, but simply to excite the mind to exert itself in a particular *course of action*.” Again : “ Those who are *renovated* neither exhibit any indication to others, nor have any consciousness themselves of having experienced any change, except in their *manner of acting* in relation to their obligations.”—part iii, p. 84.

The Rev. Theodore Spencer, known as an ardent promoter of New Divinity, in his tract entitled, “ The Deceived Professor Undeceived, and led quite to Christ,” which professes to be a dialogue between a deceived pro-

fessor and a minister, represents the parties as conversing in the following language :—

“*Minister*. Did you not, previous to submission, spend much time in efforts to obtain right feelings, in endeavouring to submit feelingly, or in prayer to God for a new heart ?

“*Professor*. I did, but without success. Indeed, at last, I despaired of ever doing duty.

“*Min*. While despairing of success, and before indulging a hope, do you remember forming *any determination* as to your future course of life ; or making up your mind as to what God might do with you in time and eternity ? I do not refer to any act you would denominate as done feelingly, but *a mere resolution* neither preceded nor followed by perceptible feelings.

“*Pro*. I do remember such an act, although I have not regarded it as of any importance. While alone in my room, reflecting on my dangerous state, I *made up my mind* to do my duty and serve God for the future. I have no recollection of any materially different resolution.

“*Min*. That *seemingly trivial determination* was the gate by which you entered into the path you have since been walking, either to life or death ; it was your *submission*, either genuine or spurious.”—p. 9.

Whether the submission which this “mere resolution,”—this “seemingly trivial determination” constituted, was genuine or spurious, depends, according to Mr. Spencer’s notions, on whether it was entirely disinterested or not—whether it was formed in view of obtaining salvation, or without any reference to that object, and with a willingness to be saved or damned as God should determine.

This professor is pronounced deluded, because he determined to obey in order to secure his salvation, and not “merely because God and duty required it, willing that right might take place whether” he were “saved or pun-

ished." The resolution would have been genuine submission if it had been formed with an entire indifference to his salvation. But those who do not hold this doctrine of disinterestedness, do not make it a part of the criterion of true submission. Nor is this to be regretted, as it serves only to render the heresy more pernicious and revolting.

The Christian Spectator, in a review of a work written by Rev. Dr. Skinner, and President Beecher, of Illinois College, entitled, "HINTS DESIGNED TO AID CHRISTIANS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO CONVERT MEN TO GOD," attributes to those authors the doctrine under consideration.

The reviewer remarks: "In examining these directions, we shall find that they are founded on such principles as the following:—

"First, that the change in regeneration consists wholly in the sinner's own acts, and not in a change of any thing in the constitution of the mind lying back of those actions."—p. 233, vol. iv, No. 2.

The other principles relate to other topics. It is therefore unnecessary to quote them at present. This doctrine is elaborately and perseveringly advocated by the conductors of the Christian Spectator. The reviewer gives it his cordial sanction. He says, with reference to several passages of Scripture which he quotes as countenancing it, "Now who that has not been misled by a philosophical theory, would imagine that by these directions it was meant or implied, that God must first change some constitutional *principle* or *disposition* in the mind, back of the man's *actions*, and thus *prepare* the persons addressed to perform the things required?"

Other examples might be adduced if necessary, but these are quite sufficient to show that we have neither hastily attributed this doctrine to the New School divines, nor reasoned incorrectly in deducing it from their views of natural ability and depravity.

This doctrine is already refuted, inasmuch as the principles in which it has its origin have been proved to be both unscriptural and absurd. If depravity consists in something more than a want of "will" to serve God, or than wrong "voluntary exercises," that change by which it is removed must consist in something more than a change of purpose.

The conclusion which we have thus drawn, will be found to accord with all the representations of Scripture. They speak of the *heart* as the subject of the change under consideration. "I will give them one *heart*, and I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony *heart* out of their flesh, and I will give them a *heart* of flesh. That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances to do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God," Ezek. xi, 19, 20. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy *heart*, and the *heart* of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live," Deut. xxx, 6. "The Lord opened the *heart* of Lydia, that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul," Acts xvi, 14. And without entering into the speculations of philosophy further than the Scriptures lead us, we may affirm, that the heart—the subject of this change, is not a mere purpose, a voluntary action, but a *source* of voluntary action. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," Matt. xv, 18, 19. "With the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x, 10. If, then, the change takes place on the heart, which is here represented as the constitutional source of holy or sinful exercises, it must be something more than a change of volition.

“What are the marks of regeneration as furnished by the Scriptures? They are, freedom from condemnation, deliverance from the thralldom of the flesh, and walking in the spirit, or obedience to the commands of God. But nothing is more clearly taught by the word of God, than that there may be a change of “will” and the voluntary exercises, and yet all these marks be absent. “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not,” &c. “I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Here is the “will” manifesting itself in efforts to break the dominion of the flesh and keep the law, but these efforts fail. They wage an unsuccessful conflict with the law of sin in the members—“the principle of sin personified,” as Mr. Duffield denominates it. The lusts of the flesh triumph. The condemnation and wretchedness remain. And this state of things is described by the apostle, as anterior to a change in which all these difficulties are removed, and all the characteristics of a regenerate state exhibited. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus, hath made me *free* from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

In precise accordance with these examples and reasonings, is the direction which Joshua gave to the Israelites. Some of them, and probably a considerable number, were guilty of idolatry. He urged them to put away the gods which their fathers served, and serve the Lord. He insisted on an immediate choice,—“Choose you this day whom ye will serve,” chap. xxiv, 23. They decided that they would serve the Lord. He then gave them to understand that the obligations they were assuming required great courage and determination, and that they could not serve God and idols at the same time. The people solemnly and voluntarily repeated their resolution to serve God. Joshua did not call in question their sincerity, but evidently assuming that this was their honest, deliberate purpose, addressed them in the following language: “Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have *chosen the Lord* to serve him, and they said, We are witnesses.” Now if a will, or purpose, or choice, or determination to serve God, constitutes or implies regeneration, these Israelites were regenerated as soon as they had made the choice. So Mr. Spencer understands the subject. He tells us that *conversion* “is that act which that devoted servant of God, Joshua, required of the Israelites after presenting the Lord before them. “Choose this day whom ye will serve,” and it is *that act* which the people cordially performed, “we will serve the Lord.” But Joshua understood the matter differently. He immediately adds, “Now, therefore, put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your hearts unto the Lord God of Israel.” A direction which plainly proves that, notwithstanding their resolution to obey God, there yet remained the task of putting away the strange gods, and inclining their hearts unto the Lord God of Israel: unless we suppose that a man may be regenerate before he puts away his idolatry and gives his affections to God.

The resolution had to be carried into effect. It is not uncommon for men, under the excitement of motives, to resolve on actions which they never perform. When they proceed to the execution of their purpose, they come in contact with a disinclination which prostrates, and triumphs over, their most magnanimous resolves. This act of choice, instead of constituting regeneration, was but the commencement of the process which leads on to regeneration.

The doctrine which we oppose is refuted by all those passages of Scripture which represent salvation as conditional; inasmuch as the performance of the condition, which in the nature of things must precede regeneration, presupposes the change of purpose—the choice, &c., in which it is alleged regeneration consists.

The vain subterfuges to which the advocates of this doctrine are driven, in their efforts to sustain it, are of themselves sufficient to render it very suspicious. The Scriptures, as we have seen, represent the heart to be the subject of regeneration. Mr. Spencer, true to his theory, resolves the heart into *mere action*. In his tract, "The Sinner led quite to Christ," page 15, he says, "The term heart, when used as constituting the moral character of the soul, must mean the desires, affections, *or acts of the soul*, as the soul is to be praised or blamed only for *its acts*."

Mr. Finney runs into the same egregious error. He defines the heart to be "that deep-rooted but *voluntary preference* of the mind, which *lies back of all its other voluntary affections and emotions*, and from which they take their character." Regeneration he defines to be a voluntary change of this preference. But he is admirably inconsistent. Can he not perceive the difficulty in which he involves himself? A man is voluntarily to change the preference which "*lies back of all his other volitions*."

A volition is to arise out of that preference, so hostile as to destroy it, and substitute for it one of a decidedly opposite character. Out of the voluntary preference for sin, is to arise a voluntary preference for holiness. The volition which the preference originates, is to turn around and change the preference by which it is originated. The effect is to destroy its own cause. The difficulty is not relieved by a recurrence to the consideration, that this deep-seated preference is in the first instance voluntary—a pretence which will, by no means, endure the investigations of a sound philosophy: for when it has been once formed, all other volitions arise out of it, and must therefore be in accordance with it; and the voluntary attempt of the individual, to whom it belongs, to change it, must encounter the impossibilities which we have specified.

Mr. Duffield, for the same purpose, resorts to the science of physiology, and devotes two chapters to an investigation of the nature of *life*. He contends that it is not a principle, as is generally supposed—a cause of vital action, but consists in action itself. He defines it to consist in “the regular series of relative appropriate characteristic actions of an individual being.”—p. 115. He attaches great importance to this speculation, as will appear from what he says on page 205: “The writings of many theologians contain expressions which betray, at one time, utter *ignorance*, and at another, *erroneous views* with regard to the nature of *life*. It seems to be taken for granted by not a few, that, *physiologically*, life is a *created essence*, and itself a *cause* of those actions and processes in our *animal* frame, which we call vital; and speaking *analogically*, therefore, as our terms are borrowed from material things, the impression is almost indelibly made that they consider regeneration literally to be the infusion, implantation, or creation of some inherent princi-

ple, essence, or substance, which is specifically the cause of those actions we account spiritual or holy."

The application of his theory of life to the doctrine of regeneration is this: If *natural* life consists in action, we are authorized, by analogy, to conclude that *spiritual* life consists in action. And as regeneration is the commencement of spiritual life, it cannot consist in the origination of a new principle of spiritual action, but must consist wholly in the commencement of the action itself. "Regeneration," says he, "is the commencement of the life which has been lost, the rational soul of man *beginning to act* appropriately in the exercise of its moral powers or capacities."—p. 196.

Whether life consists in action solely, or is a principle, we are not anxious at present to determine. This we know, that the views of many very able and popular physiologists are decidedly at variance with those of Mr. Duffield.

But, even admitting that life does consist altogether in action, our very physiological theologian is exceedingly unfortunate in his definition of it. "It consists," he says, "in the regular series of relative appropriate characteristic actions of an individual being." But what does he mean by the "regular series?" Does he mean the aggregate of a man's actions? We cannot tell what other idea to attach to his phraseology. If he means some particular actions, it would be obligatory on him, in attempting a definition, to specify those actions in which life consists, in contradistinction to those in which it does not consist. It is unnecessary, however, to search further, inasmuch as he uses another expression which determines his meaning to be as we have supposed. He speaks of it as "the *totality* of that series of actions or motions observable in an organized body." Mark the effect of this definition! If life consists in action, and it takes the "regular series," "the

totality" of the actions of a being to constitute it, it will follow, inevitably, that no man is in possession of life until the last in the "series" of actions is performed, and by that time *he will be dead!* Such is the fatally ludicrous consequence to which this definition fairly conducts us.

Again, his own application of the definition completely explodes it. The design is to secure the doctrine that spiritual life consists solely in action, and that, of course, regeneration is simply a change of voluntary action. He gives us to understand that the first spiritual act indicates the existence of spiritual life. "Regeneration is the commencement of spiritual life. That life must have its commencement in some *act* or *exercise*, which is the *first* in the new series. Faith, which is simply a belief in the truth as made known by a credible witness, is that *act* or *exercise* of which, where God is the witness, life, in the sacred Scriptures, is predicated." "It will not be questioned on the one hand, that till a man believes he is destitute of spiritual life; nor, on the other, that he no sooner believes than he lives."—p. 202.

Here we are plainly told that life has its commencement in the *first act* of the new series—that faith is the first act, and that a man no sooner performs that act than he lives. From which it clearly follows, that a single act constitutes that, to constitute which the whole of a series of acts is necessary.

The most formidable objection brought against the Scriptural doctrine of regeneration is, that it is "*physical*." This word, physical, seems to be the champion argument—the Goliath of the host. We find him, ever and anon, stalking forth on the field of controversy, armed in dreadful italics, and frowning defiance. But it requires no extraordinary prowess to prostrate and decapitate him with his own sword. The objection is perfectly harmless. The term "physical," as we have seen, is ambiguous.

Our New School friends choose to call every thing pertaining to man physical, except his voluntary actions. If, therefore, the change affects any thing but his voluntary actions, it must, of course, be a physical change. This sapient argument amounts to this, and no more: Your doctrine, that regeneration consists in something more than a change of voluntary exercises, is false and absurd, because it represents the change as consisting in something more than a change of voluntary exercises.

Mr. D. affects to find a number of weighty objections arising out of the practical influence of the doctrine he opposes—"its deleterious effects on practical piety." These he intimates are very numerous. "It does not comport with the design of" his "work to enumerate them all." Some of them are, in our opinion, wholly imaginary; while others are highly creditable to the doctrine against which they are urged. It does not comport with our design to review all the sophistries of Mr. D.'s book, but we will venture to notice *one* of these objections. It has some peculiarities, and may possibly work sudden conviction in minds of kindred taste with the one in which it originated. He says, "Its crippling and benumbing effects have long been felt in the churches, where there has been intelligence associated with piety; and where ignorance has obtained, the most wild and fanatical delusions have flowed from it. Weak-minded and superstitious persons, considering regeneration to be an act of physical power, and altogether unobserving of their own conscious exercises, have mistaken excitements of feeling and reveries of imagination for the impulses and visions of the Spirit. We were once called to see a lecherous female, who supposed herself near death, and was exulting in the conviction that she had been born again, produced by the ease of body and revery of imagination, induced by the use of laudanum, and whose belief

in the Spirit's direct and powerful agency on the soul was not to be shaken, but who lived long enough to return to her wicked ways, and prove it all to have been a delusion."

What would be the appropriate "voluntary exercise" in view of such an outrage on the decencies of theological controversy, whether pity or indignation, it is difficult to decide. What bearing, we ask, has this case on the doctrine in question? Might she not as easily have been deluded with the supposition that she had "submitted?" Who would be compelled to acknowledge her a genuine convert, even supposing her belief in the Spirit's direct and powerful agency could not be shaken? But since the case has been immortalized for the purpose of throwing odium on the doctrine of a large proportion of the Christian community, we shall dispose of it by showing that the female in question exhibited all the marks of genuine New School conversion. In the first place, all her depravity consisted in intelligent voluntary exercises. These may be as effectually interrupted by laudanum as by any other means. Of course, while she was under the influence of laudanum she was free from depravity, and therefore a Christian. But supposing that the effect of the laudanum was not sufficient to suspend the voluntary exercises, the case is not altered. There was evidently a change in the character of her voluntary exercises. She commenced a "new series." She sends for a minister, *wills* to be a Christian, and a change of purpose is all that is necessary to make her one; and exults in the conviction that the change has taken place. As to her living long enough to return to her wicked ways, that does not necessarily prove that she was under a delusion. Mr. D. does not hold that Christians live without sin. He understands the Apostle Paul to be speaking of his own experience, in his regenerate state, in the latter part of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where he says, "For we know

that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin," &c. He tells us that "of whatever deviations from the law the apostle was guilty, they were to be attributed to the influence of sin, which he *personifies*, and not to the deep and fixed principles of his renovated character. His will in the main was right, but it was resisted, counteracted, and oftentimes overpowered by various considerations, of which he did not cordially and deliberately approve, nor of that which they led him to do." Now we have only to apply these explanations to her case, and her subsequent sinning is accounted for, without supposing her deluded. It may be "attributed to the influence of sin personified, and not to the deep and fixed principles of" her "renovated character." Her "will, in the main," may have been "right," "but resisted, counteracted, and oftentimes overpowered by various considerations, of which" she "did not cordially approve, nor of that which they led" her "to do."

CHAPTER XII.

REGENERATION CONTINUED.

IT is clearly inferable, from the doctrines reviewed in the preceding chapters, *that one single act of the mind—the very first which involves the smallest degree of conformity to the will of God, no matter what its specific character may be, constitutes regeneration, and changes a man in one moment from an impenitent rebel into a Christian.* According to this system, any act, professing to be preparatory or conducive to a change of heart, must be construed into a wilful tampering with solemn obligation. It is nothing more nor less, than purposely withholding from God what the sinner is able to render *at once*, on the pretext that

there is something to be attended to by way of preparation. What is this but downright rebellion? Indeed, the rebellion, which consists in a prompt and honest refusal to obey, would be far less aggravated than that which professes to be preparing to do what may be done at any moment, if the individual of whom it is required is only willing, and which he postpones merely because he prefers to attend first to something else. Consequently, that *one act* by which he wills, or purposes, or begins to obey God, or turns aside *in any way* from unqualified rebellion, changes him, in *one moment*, from an *impenitent rebel* to a *Christian*.

This consequence is not denied. It is also incorporated into the system, constitutes one of its distinctive tenets, and is frequently and unequivocally asserted.

Dr. Beecher, in his "Views in Theology," remarks, "The graces of the Spirit admit not of a progressive creation. Love or enmity, penitence or impenitence, faith or unbelief, are the only positive conditions of the human mind. There is and can be no such thing as love, penitence, or faith, half formed and progressive to a completion."—p. 203.

This passage plainly discloses the opinion, that one single act changes the sinner from total depravity to holiness. The first and faintest relenting of the enmity to God—one single act of repentance or faith, is sufficient to make a Christian. There is no such thing as repentance and faith begun and progressive to a completion. There is no *process* from total depravity to entire holiness—no transition state. The only alternatives are the impenitence, unbelief, and enmity, of the determined rebel, or the sanctity of the undoubted and full-grown Christian.

Dr. Skinner and President Beecher give the following direction in "Hints to Aid Christians in their Efforts to Convert Men to God." "By all means avoid making the

impression on the minds of those with whom you converse, that the work of becoming religious requires a considerable time to be spent in protracted efforts. Let them know that to become religious is an intelligent, voluntary, indivisible *act of the mind*, in which it ceases to rebel against God, submits to his authority, and accepts his mercy. Tell them that to perform this act requires no length of time, and no protracted effort ; that it may be done at this time, and in this place ; and that if they depart from this place without performing this act, they go in the spirit of a stouter rebellion, and may bring upon themselves swift and sudden destruction.”—p. 43.

This language is plain, and to the purpose. It informs us, that becoming religious is *one indivisible act*, the performance of which requires no length of time, and no protracted effort, but may be done in any place, and at any time ; and that this one act is that by which a man ceases to be a rebel against God ; (so that of course he is a rebel until he performs it ;) and no matter what other acts he may perform, if he goes without performing this one indivisible act, he goes in the spirit of a stouter rebellion ; and that this act is that by which he not only ceases to rebel, but likewise submits to God, and accepts of his mercy. Surely, nothing need be plainer than this.

This doctrine is echoed by the Christian Spectator in a review of the work just referred to. The reviewer says, “ Let him (the sinner) also be made to feel that every thing done by him, *short of making a new heart*, is only resisting the last hope of a lost soul.”—p. 242, vol. iv, No. 2.

It is strongly reasserted in the same number, in an article on intercessory prayer. The writer says, “ This is the way to get out of his dilemma. It requires only *one simple, indivisible act*, and can never occupy more than a *moment of time*. It is an act which he is bound by every possible obligation to perform *immediately* ; and, to make

the point as clear as possible, we will add, that act in which a sinner ceases from his rebellion, and accepts of mercy and salvation on God's terms."—p. 274.

Here we are plainly told that it requires but one simple, indivisible act, which the sinner is bound to perform, to rescue him from his dilemma; that it is by this act that the sinner ceases from his rebellion, and accepts of mercy and salvation on God's terms, and, of course, becomes a Christian; that he is under obligation to perform this act immediately; that it can never occupy but a moment of time, and that any thing short of this act, or making a new heart, is only resisting "the last hope of a lost soul."

The Rev. Mr. Duffield says, "Regeneration is the commencement of the life that has been lost—the rational soul of man *beginning to act appropriately* in the exercise of its moral powers or capacities—his mind, and will, and heart, being directed to God as the supreme and chief end."—p. 195.

Again: "This life commences with his faith, or belief in the testimony of God—the *first in the series* of those *acts and exercises* in which it consists."—p. 197.

Again: "The life of the rational soul, it has been seen, consisted originally in the relative series of those actions appropriate to its necessitabilities and capacities, in the perception, approbation, pursuit, and enjoyment of the divine favour, as its true and supreme felicity. This life has been lost. Men are naturally opposed to God, as shall be shown hereafter. Regeneration is the commencement of spiritual life. That life must have its commencement in some *act or exercise* which is the *first in the series*."—p. 201.

Again: "Now it is obvious, that there is a natural tendency of the truths and facts revealed in the Scriptures, to induce those *exercises*, appropriate to the capacities,

conditions, and relations of men, *in the commencement of which consists regeneration.*”—p. 533.

Examples from this author might be multiplied, but these are quite sufficient to disclose his views on this subject. He tells us that spiritual *life* consists in appropriate action, or exercise of the powers of the soul; that this life, which was lost, is restored by regeneration; that regeneration is *beginning* to act appropriately; that life must have its commencement in some *act* or *exercise*, and that the act in which it commences is the *first* in the new series.

Mr. Barnes, who is much more cautious in his developments of New Divinity than many who have not been placed in such delicate and perplexing circumstances, exemplifies the tendency of his theory in this direction, and proclaims his opinion in the following definition of regeneration, contained in his sermon on “The Way of Salvation.” “It is,” says he, “that revolution of character, when a man ceases to be a sinner *total* and *unqualified*, and *begins* to be a man of holiness.”

This passage is explicit. It is certainly by the *first* good act that a man *ceases* to be a sinner *total* and *unqualified*; that act we are told is regeneration, and consequently it makes him a Christian. Regeneration is not, according to this theory, that “revolution of character” by which a penitent struggling with innate depravity, and believing in Jesus Christ, is, in view of his previous faith and penitence, graciously delivered from its bondage. The very first movement of the mind—the very first thought—the first volition by which he turns aside from *total* and *unqualified* rebellion, is regeneration.

This doctrine is strongly asserted by Mr. Lord, the New-York author of “Views in Theology.” He objects to “that definition of regeneration which exhibits it as a change of the governing purpose in respect to the object

of supreme affection, or a mere determination to love and serve God." He affirms that it is "at variance with the divine word, the laws of our agency, and the testimony of consciousness." We are not to suppose, from this language, that he objects to this definition as *falling short* of regeneration, although that would naturally be the first impression. He contends that a "determination to love and serve God, or make him the object of supreme regard," cannot in every instance be "the first act of obedience." To be an obedient act, he argues, "it must spring from a present love or preference of God;" it must be a "consequence of right affections, and therefore not the first obedient act." The argument is, that this determination to love and serve God implies a previous regeneration, and therefore cannot constitute regeneration. But his principal objection to this definition is, that it proceeds on the assumption, "that the first obedient act, whatever it may be, is in every instance of the same species, as an act of determination, of submission, of love, or of faith, in distinction from all other forms of obedience."

He contends that this is not the case, and that the nature of the first obedient act will be determined by the nature of the mind's perceptions at the time; "and may differ in its form in different individuals, according as their perceptions vary in nature or extent, or the relations differ in which God, or the truths that respect him, are contemplated." He goes on to affirm that "in some it may be self-abhorrence, humility, penitence, approval of the divine law; in others, an adoring acquiescence in the purity and rectitude of God, submission to his will, complacency in his benevolence, gratitude for his mercy, reliance on his promises, a joyful acceptance of salvation through Christ, or *any other form* of obedient agency in which there is *no reference to a previous state of obedience.*"—p. 360.

Here it is plainly inculcated, that not only does the very

first act, performed in obedience to the divine requirement, constitute or presuppose regeneration, but that it is no matter what the specific form of the act may be. It may be the first act of self-abhorrence, humility, penitence, faith, gratitude, or any other form of agency which the law of God may require. Hence, if the law of God require of us a desire for salvation, the first emotion of desire is sufficient to secure the favour of God and regeneration.

Mr. Finney, in his lecture on "Directions to Sinners," uses similar language. "It is a great error," he says, "to suppose that any one particular exercise is always foremost in conversion, or that every sinner must have faith first, or submission first. It is not true, either in philosophy or fact. There is a great variety in people's exercises. Whatever point is taken hold of between God and the sinner, when the sinner yields that, he is converted. *Whatever the particular exercise may be*, if it includes obedience of heart to God *on any point*, it is true conversion. When he yields *one* point to God's authority, he is *ready* to yield *all*. When he changes his mind, and obeys in *one thing* because it is God's will, he will obey in other things, so far as he sees it to be God's will."—p. 344.

Additional quotations are unnecessary. Those which we have given are full and explicit, and from distinguished sources. We do not wish to be understood as affirming, that the New School preachers and writers never contradict these doctrines, and teach those which are more Scriptural; but that they belong strictly and properly to the system of New Divinity, and are actually promulgated by its leading abettors.

CHAPTER XIII.

REGENERATION CONTINUED.

As the dangerous positions exposed in the preceding chapter have been asserted and reiterated, both from the pulpit and the press, we will endeavour to disprove them by comparing them with that infallible criterion of truth, the holy Scriptures.

Before entering immediately upon the argument, we would remark, that the error of the first position does not consist in asserting that one single act ultimately introduces a man to the blessing of justification, and its concomitant attainments. It is certain that, however lengthened may be the series of acts and exercises which precedes that blessing, there must be one of that series with which it is immediately connected. For illustration, I cannot pass from the room in which I now write, and enter another, a mile distant, by one single step. By successive steps I must leave one apartment, and arrive at the threshold of the other. But when I arrive there, it is ultimately by one single step that I cross the threshold, and enter that apartment. And if I refuse to take that one step, I must remain without, notwithstanding all the previous steps I have taken. Thus it is with the sinner who turns to God and seeks his favour. He enters upon a series of exercises, but there is one single act of faith which at last secures him justification. The doctrine that we object to is, that *one single act* changes a man from an *impenitent rebel* to a *Christian*!—that there is no process in the change; that one moment the sinner is a rebel *total* and *unqualified*—growing worse instead of better—and the next moment he is a Christian!

To state the doctrine fully must, we think, be sufficient

to refute it. Look at it again ! A man is rapidly aggravating his rebellion, by every succeeding act growing worse and worse—when lo ! just as his rebellion is at its height, without one single intervening thought, or step, conducing to such a change, in one moment of time, by the very next volition, he makes himself a Christian. He leaps, by one single bound, as sudden as the lightning's flash, from one confirmed state of mind—a state of mind becoming more and more confirmed and inveterate by each successive act—to another state of mind, so different from the former, that the change is denominated by the inspired writers, who best understand it, a new creation—being brought from darkness to light—translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God. Is this philosophical ? We aver that it is downright nonsense. But this is a matter to be settled by the authority of Scripture. To the Scriptures, therefore, we turn, for their unerring decision.

In the first place they represent it to be the duty of men to *hear the word of God*. The Apostle Paul reasons thus on the subject : “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed ? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without a preacher ?” Again : “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” While many are placed in circumstances that render their hearing the word of God almost inevitable, there are thousands who utterly neglect or refuse to hear it. The word of the Lord came unto Ezekiel, saying, “Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see and see not, ears they have to hear and hear not, for they are a rebellious house.” Our Saviour complained of the people thus : “For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their eyes have they closed ; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their

ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Hence the peculiarly solemn and emphatic manner in which it is enjoined, "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." "And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people. Who hath ears to hear let him hear."

But simply hearing the word of God, although a duty, is not sufficient. Our Saviour and his apostles cautioned those who heard, to take heed *how* they heard. *Attention is necessary*—attention to the import and application of the message. Our Saviour complained of some in his day in this language: "Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." This language plainly implies that the word may be *so* heard, that the effect is the same as if it were not heard. It fails to make the necessary impression on the understanding. This subject the Saviour illustrates by the parable of the sower. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which receiveth seed by the way-side." There are thousands of "way-side" hearers. They listen so carelessly, that they immediately lose the impression of what they have heard. Now if they were wholly incapable of being more deeply impressed, they would be inexcusable. But this is not the case. It is wilful inattention which makes the hearing of none effect. Hence the hearing required is sometimes qualified by the word "diligently:" "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken *diligently* unto me,

and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," Isaiah lv, 2. Again: "If thou wilt *diligently* hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of those diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee," Exodus xv, 26. While therefore the children of men are required to place themselves in a situation for the word of God to fall upon their outward ears, they are likewise required to give it the attention of their understanding.

The Scriptures likewise charge the impenitent with a want of *consideration* of divine things. Jehovah complains thus: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." "And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness." This exercise is distinctly and separately required and enforced by the law of God. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways." "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver."

Now consideration is an exercise distinct from that of simple attention. A man may give his attention to a statement or argument, so as to understand it perfectly, and then dismiss the subject from his mind, and devote his meditation wholly to other subjects, and forget what he has heard. Whereas, to consider, is to reflect upon a subject, review it with serious deliberation. The Apostle James illustrates this point in the following manner: "For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso *look-*

eth into the perfect law of liberty, and *continueth* therein, he, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

Again: the law of God requires of the sinner, in order to his acceptance and salvation, that he solemnly choose the service of God, and make up his mind, and purpose to obey his commandments. Hence Joshua thus addressed the children of Israel: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites among whom you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And even if there were no passage in the Bible specifying this act of the mind as necessary to becoming a servant of God, it is too plain a matter to be overlooked. Can God be supposed to approve and accept of a man, who, with a knowledge of his law, hesitates, and is undecided which course he will pursue? Besides, whatever may be the nature of that effort by which we enter into the kingdom of God, the representations which are made of its difficulty, prove that it requires a determined state of mind, a fixedness of purpose. The Saviour admonishes us thus: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many I say unto you shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." Again: "For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." But why do I attempt to prove this point? Who could think of calling in question this position; or of asserting that a man may be saved without ever making up his mind to serve God?

Let us now look for a moment at the result of our inquiries. We have ascertained the necessity of four distinct and successive acts and exercises of the mind, in order to acceptance with God, and regeneration. But, if hearing the word of God, and giving strict attention to the

message, and serious reflection upon it, were not distinct exercises, and distinctly enjoined; if, on the contrary, they may be supposed to constitute but one exercise, the requisition last noticed is sufficient to demolish the position, that one single act of the mind changes a man from an impenitent rebel to a Christian. For, besides the fact that two exercises are distinctly and peremptorily enjoined, the choice or purpose, to be an intelligent act, and not merely the result of caprice, must be in view of some reason, and therefore necessarily presupposes the hearing, attention, and deliberation which are enjoined; so that no man can even make up his mind to become a Christian without performing a series of acts.

But this choice or determination to serve God does not terminate the series. It is not enough. *The sinner is likewise required to confess his sins.* "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy," Prov. xxviii, 13. Again: "If they shall *confess* their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with the trespass which they trespassed against me, and also that they have walked contrary to me; and that I also have walked contrary to them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies, if their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they accept of the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember their land," Lev. xxvi, 40. Again: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1 John i, 9.

The confession required in these passages is obviously in order to salvation. It is the confession of the guilty sinner, the uncircumcised in heart, that he may obtain forgiveness. We have here, not only an additional exercise,

equally necessary with those previously stated, but one which clearly implies them, especially a purpose to forsake all sin and obey God. Confessions of sin which are not preceded by a purpose of mind to forsake it, would be an insult to divine authority. Besides all this, confession of sin itself must consist rather in a class of actions than in one single act.

But there are other exercises required. The sinner *must pray to God for mercy*, as well as confess his sins. So the apostle directed Simon the sorcerer. "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money, thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and *pray God*, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," Acts viii, 20-23. Isaiah asserts this obligation when he says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, *call ye upon him* while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," lv, 6. It is enjoined by the mouth of the Prophet Jeremiah: "Then shall ye *call* upon me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me and shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart," Jer. xxix, 12, 13.

This obligation is also distinctly recognised by the following passages: "If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be *angry* with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives into a land far off or near; yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and *pray* unto thee in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives,

saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, we have dealt wickedly, &c., &c.: then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, *their prayer and their supplication*, and maintain their cause, and *forgive* thy people which have sinned against thee," 2 Chron. vi, 36, 37, 39. Again: "Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the Lord, in the ears of the people, in the Lord's house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities. It may be they will *present their supplication before the Lord*, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the Lord hath pronounced against them," Jer. xxxvi, 6, 7. Again: "And it shall come to pass, that *whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*," Rom. x, 13.

Repentance is required in order to salvation: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," Acts iii, 19. It is not necessary to our present purpose to define repentance, or determine its relation to all the other exercises with which it is connected. It is sufficient that it is required, and that it is distinct from other required acts. This, we think, is undeniable. What repentance can there be which is not founded on a conviction of sin, and of the justice of the Almighty's claims? But this conviction must result from a previous attention to, and consideration of, these things. And while repentance thus plainly presupposes these acts, there are other acts which as certainly presuppose repentance. This, we think, is the case with prayer and confession of sin.

Again. *Faith* is an indispensable prerequisite to salvation. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "He that believeth shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned." Now, it can scarcely be necessary to attempt to prove that this act is distinct from many of those

which have been specified. It must, in the nature of things, be preceded by attention to the word of God. The apostle tells us that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Again: while faith must be preceded by certain acts, there are other acts which necessarily presuppose faith. For instance: Can a man repent of his sins toward God, who does not believe in the existence of a God, or of a divine government, or that the government of God lays him under obligation to pursue a different course of conduct to that which he has pursued? The apostle settles this matter definitely: "And how shall they call on him on whom they have not believed? For he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

It may present a difficulty to some minds, that faith should be made the grand consideration in view of which a sinner is justified, and yet be required to precede other acts which are necessary. It is not faith simply, it is not any one act of faith, or faith in any one proposition, or any supposable degree of faith, which justifies the ungodly, but faith in certain specified truths, and such a degree of faith as amounts to trust, to entire confidence. Thus it is that those acts which necessarily presuppose faith, lead on, at the same time, to other acts of faith, and increase its strength, until, at last, that faith is exercised which brings salvation.

The comprehensive requisition which enjoins that we *seek* the favour of God, is sufficient to refute the doctrine, that one single act of the mind constitutes the great change. Seeking God doubtless includes all that is necessary to be done. But search for an object implies, that from some cause or causes it is not immediately accessible, and that a succession of efforts must be made to obtain it.

These exercises are represented as characterized by distress of mind in a greater or lesser degree. Indeed, this

state of mind is made obligatory. Not that we are required to produce it by direct efforts to that end, but we are required to perform acts which it invariably accompanies.

The examples of conversion recorded in the Scriptures, will be found decidedly at variance with this dogma of New Divinity. A few of them will be presented.

Take the case of the publican: "Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this poor publican: I fast twice a week: I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!" Luke xviii.

Here are presented to us three distinct exercises. First, he was deeply distressed on account of his sins, as was indicated by his smiting upon his breast, and by his downcast eyes; secondly, he confessed himself a sinner against God; and, thirdly, he prayed for mercy. But while these acts are stated, how many are implied? He had, no doubt, heard the word of God, given to it the attention of his mind, seriously considered its representations of his condition, and the claims of God, yielded the convictions of his understanding to the testimony of revelation, and fully purposed to forsake his sins and serve God. And now, with this conviction and this purpose, he comes to the temple of God, to humble himself, confess his sins, and pray for salvation.

Take the case of the jailer, Acts xvi, 30. He was convinced that he was a sinner, and exposed to punishment. He inquired of the apostle what he must do to be saved. This inquiry was sincere, and therefore implied a desire or determination to do what was required. The apostle

directed him to perform the additional act of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. This act he performed, and was converted, and rejoiced in God.

Look at the history of St. Paul's conversion. When recovered from his sudden prostration, he said, "Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord declined giving him, in person, the instructions necessary, but directed him to Damascus, saying, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do." His company led him to Damascus, where he fasted and prayed for three days. There Ananias came to him, and, having first restored him to sight, (for the vision left him blind,) and informed him of the revelation he had received respecting him, addressed him thus: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord," Acts xxii, 16. Attending to these duties, he received the Holy Ghost. He then partook of food, and was strengthened in body as well as in mind.

Here also we have a series of acts. He first, as a matter of course, inquires, "Who art thou, Lord?" The term "Lord," in this interrogation, is used merely as an expression of respect, like the word, sir. When informed on this point, he relinquishes his designs of persecution, and purposes obedience to the will of Christ. When he inquired what he should do, it was no doubt his fixed purpose to do whatever was enjoined. He then, in obedience to the divine direction, proceeded to Damascus, and there fasted and prayed. And it was not until three days had elapsed, that Ananias found him and gave him the directions already quoted, in attending to which, he received the Holy Ghost.

The parable of the prodigal son furnishes an interesting illustration of this subject, Luke xv, 11. He commenced by reflecting on his sad condition, comparing it with that of the servants in his father's house: "And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants in my father's house have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger." He then came to this resolution—*I will* arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." He then proceeded to carry his purpose into effect by returning home, making the humble confession, and presenting the equally humble petition which his feelings and judgment dictated. And it was at this point that he met with the compassion and forgiveness of his father.

David's account of his penitential exercises will be found equally at variance with the New School theory, and in accordance with the views which we advocate: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgression: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and

renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”—Psa. li.

Here we have a fixed purpose of mind, a confession of depravity and transgression, an earnest prayer both for forgiveness and sanctification, and confidence in the mercy of God. Perhaps it may be supposed, by some, that the aspect of the question is changed by the consideration that this was not the psalmist's first conversion, but his recovery from backsliding. This does not alter the case. The instructions of Christ to those who have left their first love are to repent and do their first works.

CHAPTER XIV.

REGENERATION CONTINUED.

WE have seen that the system of New Divinity teaches that the sinner, in becoming religious, is changed, in one moment, by one indivisible act of the mind, from the condition of an impenitent rebel into that of a Christian. Against this doctrine the argument of the preceding chapter was directed. We there endeavoured to prove that the change from one of these characters to the other, includes a series of distinct exercises—a succession of changes. At this point we are met by an objection. It is argued, that those exercises which are supposed to precede the one act by which a man becomes a Christian, are either penitent and believing, or impenitent and unbelieving. If penitent and believing, then he who performs them is already a Christian. If impenitent and unbelieving, they

cannot possibly be acceptable to God, or conduce to a change of heart; but, on the contrary, must accumulate guilt, and thus separate more widely between him and his God. This objection seems to be relied upon, as armed with irresistible power. It is frequently reiterated, and may be made to look very plausible. We will examine it for a moment.

It evidently assumes that there are no degrees of repentance or faith, and that the very first act or degree of repentance or faith, is all that is required to make the Christian:—that the requisition of the gospel in this respect is fully met at once, or we remain wholly impenitent and unbelieving. If we can overthrow this assumption, the objection vanishes. It will follow that we may be penitent and believing to some extent, and yet be required to perform acts which conduce to those further degrees of penitence and faith which are necessary to salvation.

There are portions of the Scriptures which, we think, cannot be intelligibly interpreted, except on the principle that there are degrees of repentance. What are we to understand by that passage which says, “Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death,” 2 Cor. 7-9. Here we are told that “godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation.” An attempt may be made to evade the force of this passage, by asserting that sorrow is not repentance, and that they do not necessarily accompany each other. But this would be unavailing in the present instance. It is readily granted that “the sorrow of the world may have no connection with repentance, but whoever thought of a wholly impenitent sinner influenced

by *godly* sorrow for his sins—a sorrow working repentance *unto salvation*. If godly sorrow is not repentance, it certainly implies repentance. But the truth in the case is this, godly sorrow is repentance itself, prompting to appropriate acts by which repentance is increased to that degree which connects it with salvation. The apostle informs us in what way “godly sorrow” conduced to this result in the Corinthians: “For behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge; in all these things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” Can the sorrow which produces these effects, so highly commended by the apostle, be ascribed to an entirely and obstinately impenitent man?

We are also sustained by the following text, Jer. xxxi, 18, 19: “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, *I repented*; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” Ephraim is here represented as in deep distress, bemoaning and reproaching himself for his past perverseness. He prays thus, “Turn thou me;” and connects with his prayer this declaration of his faith, “and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God.” He then adds, “Surely after that I was turned, *I repented*.” Meaning, evidently, after my prayer was answered by the vouchsafement of the desired and gracious influences, I repented.

Now, if there are not degrees of repentance, we have this strange spiritual phenomenon: Ephraim, while en-

tirely impenitent, becomes profoundly sorrowful on account of his sins and depravity, makes the most humiliating confession of them, prays to God that he may be turned, and grounds his expectation of relief on the covenant of mercy. In answer to this prayer, God turns him. After all this has taken place, he repents for the first time, and begins, for the first time, to act under the influence of penitential feelings. Who can believe such an absurdity? He that can, is not to be convinced by reason or Scripture. The obvious explanation of this passage is, Ephraim becomes penitent, and expresses his penitence by his moanings, his confessions, his self-upbraidings, and his prayer. By these acts, and especially by the influences of the Holy Spirit in answer to his prayer, his penitence is increased; it assumes a more thorough, confirmed, and decided character, and gives rise to those strong expressions of feeling which are thus described, "Surely after that I was turned I repented"—my penitence became deep and agonizing—"I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed and confounded."

That there are degrees of faith, is sufficiently proved by the reproof which our Lord addressed to his disciples: "O ye of *little* faith," and by their prayer, "Lord, increase our faith." Both the reproof and the petition would seem to be utterly irrelevant, on the supposition that there is no such thing as faith imperfect "and progressive to completion."

The inference from all this is plain and conclusive. If there are degrees of repentance and faith, a man may perform acts which are not wholly impenitent and unbelieving, notwithstanding they precede those acts and degrees of repentance and faith which are immediately connected with pardon and regeneration.

The objector, if he determine to abide by this objection, must also encounter this difficulty. If no act can be

acceptable to God that does not proceed from repentance and faith, and if the first act of repentance or faith is sufficient to constitute a man a Christian, it follows, unanswerably, that no man can do any thing toward becoming a Christian until he is a Christian. When he is required to do any thing toward becoming a Christian, he is required to be a Christian before he does that which is necessary to make him one.

There is another form of the same objection which it may be proper to notice. It is contended that all acts which precede regeneration are unholy, and therefore cannot be supposed to promote regeneration, but, on the contrary, must be unacceptable and offensive to God.

Perhaps the objection derives its plausibility, chiefly, from the error of predicating unholiness of the actions, instead of the actor. It seems clear and unanswerable, that a vicious act can do nothing toward securing the favour of God. And yet, those acts which must be performed in order to become holy, presuppose that he on whom they are enjoined is yet unholy.

But can an unholy man do any thing acceptable to God? Certainly he can. Does not God address his commands to the unholy? Does he not enjoin on them the performance of certain actions? But why command the unholy man to act in any way, if all his actions, while unholy, must necessarily be rebellious? Would it not be more, much more consistent with reason, to enjoin a total suspension of action until he has become holy? And even then there would be the same difficulty, because the voluntary suspension of all action, supposing it possible, would be the act of an unholy man. The difficulty lies as much in the way of the performance of one act, as a succession of acts.

If no act performed by an unholy man can be acceptable to God, it will follow, either that God does not require

of the unholy man any effort to become holy, or that he requires him to be holy before he makes the effort to become so, which is absurd ; or that he requires him to perform acts, in order to become holy, which are unacceptable to him ; or, in other words, he requires that which he at the same time condemns : he requires a man to sin in order to obtain forgiveness and regeneration.

But if, as New Divinity affirms, one single act of the mind changes a man from an impenitent rebel to a Christian ; if the first act of the mind which conforms to the law of God constitutes or presupposes regeneration ; if it be no matter, as we are assured by the advocates of this system, what the particular exercise may be, we must prepare ourselves to admit the following consequences :—

First : That it is not necessary for the sinner to confess his sins, in order to salvation. Because the confession of sin plainly implies the previous acts of repentance for sin and the purpose to forsake it. Who would not be shocked at the thought of an entirely impenitent man addressing to the great and incensed Jehovah an enumeration of his crimes—confession we could not call it—and that too, without any design of forsaking them ? Such a course would require uncommon hardihood in iniquity. But if there be any degree of repentance—if the purpose to forsake sin has been formed—the confession is unnecessary. The man is a Christian without it.

Again : We must suppose, either that the purpose to forsake sin and serve God is formed while a man is wholly impenitent, and is therefore one of his impenitent acts, or that such a purpose is preceded by repentance. But if it be preceded by repentance, it is, according to this theory, unnecessary. The man is a Christian without it.

We are led to this consequence by another process. No man can purpose to forsake his sins, and devote himself to the service of God, without previously exercising

faith. He must believe in the existence of God, and that he has established and maintains a moral government, and that the divine government makes this purpose his duty. But the doctrine of New Divinity is, that the very first act of faith makes a man a Christian. This purpose is, therefore, not necessary to his becoming one. He is a Christian without it.

According to this doctrine, it is not necessary to perform those exercises which are denominated *coming unto God, looking unto God, or seeking God*, in order to be saved. All these acts presuppose faith in God. The apostle says, "He that *cometh unto God* must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But the first act of faith makes or proves a man a Christian. He is, therefore, a Christian before he *comes unto God, looks unto him, or seeks him*.

It would not relieve the advocates of New Divinity from this embarrassment, to say, that a belief in the existence and government of God is not faith, or that it is not the faith which the law of God requires. It is. The apostle lays down the proposition, that "without faith it is impossible to please God," and illustrates it by adding, "For he that *cometh unto God* must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Even *submission* is rendered unnecessary to regeneration by this new gospel, inasmuch as submission to God implies faith in him.

But we have not yet fathomed this abyss of absurdity. Faith implies hearing, attention, and serious reflection. "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard," says the apostle. But hearing simply is not sufficient. There are those that hear, but so carelessly, as not to understand. There must be attention. These acts, we have seen, are required by the law of God. Now, if we suppose any of these exercises to be preceded by an act

of faith, they are, of course, superseded by it, and are thereby rendered unnecessary. But if, on the other hand, they are supposed to precede faith, the faith which is preceded by them is thereby rendered unnecessary to salvation.

Let us now try the effect of this theory on the examples of conversion adduced in the last chapter.

It renders the prayer of the publican wholly inappropriate. He came to the temple to pray, and offered his petition, under the influence of a purpose to forsake his sins and obey God, or, without having formed any such purpose. If he came with the purpose of his mind unchanged with respect to his course of life, how shall we characterize his conduct? Would not New Divinity, at once, pronounce it hypocritical and rebellious? But if, on the contrary, he came resolved to devote himself to the service of God, his prayer for mercy was wholly superfluous. This mercy had already been extended to him. He was regenerated, and of course justified, before he prayed.

Again: We must suppose, that when he sought the temple of God, and addressed to him his prayer, he was, to some extent, penitent and believing, or wholly impenitent and unbelieving. If the former, he had the mercy for which he prayed, and might have spared himself the anxiety which he felt. If the latter, his whole conduct was hypocritical and rebellious.

It convicts the answer of the apostles, to the inquiry of the jailer, of irrelevancy. We may affirm of him what we affirmed of the publican. He inquired what he should do to be saved, under the influence of a determination to do whatever God might require of him, or without such a determination. On either supposition the answer was irrelevant. If he had formed the purpose of obedience, he was already saved, and the answer of the apostle

should have been to that effect. If otherwise, the proper answer would have been a rebuke for his insincerity and wickedness, and a solemn warning. On the Arminian theory, the answer of the apostle is easily justified. The jailer had already decided the great question—he was already penitent and believing in some degree. But one single act of mind is not sufficient to change a sinner to a saint. The first exercises of penitence and faith are not enough. It still remained for him to believe—to *trust* in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Compare this theory with St. Paul's conversion. On the supposition, that, when he inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do," his mind was made up to do the will of Christ, which was unquestionably the case, we must conclude that the great spiritual change had already taken place. He was already a Christian, and the direction which Ananias gave him, to wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord, came too late. He had already washed away his sins. The bloody persecutor was made a child of God, before he left the scene of his mysterious arrest, by that one act, which is presupposed by the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The conduct of the psalmist, as a penitent, is utterly unaccountable, if this doctrine of New Divinity be true. His prayer for pardon and renovation is appropriate, only on the supposition that he was unpardoned and unrenewed. But if this were his condition, it was because he had not yet purposed to forsake his sins. What propriety, then, could there be in his apparently solemn confession of sin, his professed sorrow on account of it, and his repeated prayers for forgiveness? Would not this representation of the case place him in the predicament of a downright hypocrite? If, on the contrary, he had decided this important point, he was already in possession of that, the supposed absence of which he so feelingly deplores, and

for which he so earnestly and importunately prays. Either New Divinity is wrong, or this whole psalm is calculated to make false impressions.

The dangerous practical tendency of a doctrine which leads to such theoretical consequences, must be alarmingly apparent.

Perhaps it may be said, in reply to this suggestion, that when the sinner "yields one point to God's authority, he is ready to yield all. When he changes his mind and obeys in one thing, because it is God's will, he will obey in other things, so far as he sees it to be God's will." This, it will be remembered, is asserted by Mr. Finney. Were this doctrine true, the interests of morality and piety would be as effectually secured by this theory as by any other. But it is not true; and we are astonished that any man should think of asserting it. We grant that the sinner who yields one point *may* go on and yield all; but that he *will as a matter of course*, we deny. Mr. Finney preaches perfect obedience, in this instance, to some purpose. The sinner who submits to God in one single instance not only *may*, but *will*, therefore, submit to him in *every instance*!

This strange doctrine is plainly contradicted by these words of the apostle to the Galatians: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?" chap. v, 7. We could multiply such citations to a great extent, but it is unnecessary. These words plainly imply that one point, at least, had been yielded to God's authority; but the persons to whom they were addressed, had paused in their career of obedience.

Mr. Finney must surrender this doctrine, or, to be consistent, he must conclude that David had never yielded one point to God's authority when he committed the transgression with Uriah's wife;—that Peter had never yielded one point to God's authority when he denied his Lord with

cursing and swearing. And no reason can be assigned, why this turning aside from the path of obedience may not take place as easily in the earlier stages of submission to divine authority, as at a later period.

The Scriptures present numerous examples in direct contradiction to Mr. Finney's assertion. While many of the Jews refused to believe in the Messiahship of Jesus, Simon the sorcerer believed, and submitted to Christian baptism. He yielded that point to God's authority. And yet, so far was he from being converted, and ready to yield every other point, that he brought on himself that severe rebuke from the apostle, "Thy money perish with thee," &c. While many refuse to hear the word of God, others readily yield that point. They become hearers of the word. This is their character. But they may go no further. They may be like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass, and going away and straightway forgetting what manner of man he was. We are admonished to be not only hearers, but doers of the word: "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." The parable of the sower was specially designed to illustrate this point: "Hear, therefore, the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which receiveth seed by the way-side. But he that receiveth the word into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for awhile; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word, he is offended." In this case, the word is not only heard, but received with joy; but this does not necessarily imply a readiness to yield every point.

The case of the young man who came to our Lord to

inquire what he should do to inherit eternal life, is in point. It is thus related by St. Mark, chap. x: "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery; Do not kill; Do not steal; Do not bear false witness; Defraud not; Honor thy father and thy mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these things have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him; and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and take up the cross and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions."

Will any one contend that this man had yielded no one point to divine authority,—that he was a rebel "total and unqualified,"—that when he approached our Lord, running and kneeling down, he was wholly impenitent and unbelieving? We presume not. Had this been the case, our Lord would not have answered him as he did; nor would he have entertained that special regard for him which is indicated. Instead of telling him that he lacked one thing, and stating that one thing to be a readiness to relinquish his possessions, he would have rebuked him as John rebuked the scribes and Pharisees who came to his baptism, and as he himself rebuked them on a certain occasion. Besides, the declaration "*One thing thou lackest*," cannot be construed to mean that he lacked *every thing* that was necessary. It evidently concedes, that while there was a deficiency, he had done *part* of what was required. It is remarkable that Matthew represents the Saviour as saying to him,—"*If thou wilt be perfect*, go

and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come and follow me." This accidental variation in the phraseology cannot be supposed to include a variation in the sense. What, then, does the language of Matthew import ? Plainly this : If thou wilt do all that is required of thee—if thou wilt fulfil *perfectly* the terms of thy salvation, thou must go one step further.

This narrative is decidedly and pointedly at variance with the principles of New Divinity, which require us to suppose, either, that this young man was entirely and unqualifiedly impenitent and rebellious when he came to Christ, and must, therefore, have been playing the hypocrite, or that he was already a Christian ; both of which suppositions are manifestly false.

It may be supposed that the one-single-act theory is supported by the fact, that the blessing of the divine favour is frequently connected, by promise, with several of those acts separately, which we have specified as necessary thereto. For instance, it is said, "Hear, and your souls shall live." "He that believeth shall be saved." "They that call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," &c.

But this fact would not sustain such an inference. It is not hearing simply, or believing simply, or praying simply, or confessing simply, that is contemplated by these passages. All these exercises must have certain qualifications to render them effectual ; and the terms are frequently used to imply, not merely the simple exercise, but the exercise with its essential qualifications. Praying aright, implies several other exercises. So does the strong faith which is requisite. These exercises react on each other, promoting the necessary maturity in each and all of them ; so that he that prayeth, or believeth, or confesseth, or repenteth in the manner required, will be

saved. But then, the performance of any one of these acts, as is ultimately required, implies the performance of all the rest; so that he who does not hear, and repent, and confess, and believe, will not be saved.

CHAPTER XV.

REGENERATION CONTINUED.

THE views of regeneration which have been shown to belong to the system of New Divinity, evidently include the doctrine, that *the sinner regenerates himself*. Let it be granted that one simple act of the sinner's mind constitutes the great change, and that the sinner is able and required, to perform that act, and the inference will be inevitable that every converted man has converted himself. The supposition that God regenerates the sinner, would involve the absurdity, that the voluntary act of the sinner is the act of God. This doctrine, also, is, in many instances, distinctly and boldly promulgated. Take a few examples. Mr. Finney, in his sermon on "Sinners Bound to Change their own Hearts," says, "The fact is, that the *actual turning or change* is the sinner's *own act*."—p. 20. Again: "This subject shows also that if the sinner ever has a new heart, he must obey the command, and *make it himself*."—p. 24. Again: "Sinner, instead of waiting and praying for *God* to change your heart, you should at once summon up your powers, put forth the effort, and change the governing purpose of your mind."—p. 37.

In the passage quoted from the work of Doctor Skinner and President Beecher, in the twelfth chapter, to which the reader is referred, we are told, that "becoming religious," which is nothing more nor less than being converted to God, born again, or regenerated, is a voluntary

act of the *sinner's* mind—that *he* is required to perform it—that the performance of it requires no length of time, no protracted effort—that it may be done by him at this time and in this place—and he is to be warned against leaving the place until he has performed it. What is this but self-conversion?

Doctor Lansing asserts this doctrine in his sermon on "The Inability of Sinners Voluntary." He remarks, "A moral change is necessary; but a moral change is nothing more than a change of will, purpose, or inclination; and it is this change that God, by the mouth of the prophet, commands the sinner to *operate for himself*, when he says, 'Make you a new heart, and a new spirit.' 'Cleanse your hearts, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.'"—*Sermons*, p. 154.

But do they never attribute the change to God? Yes, frequently, and in the highest style of Calvinism, as we shall show hereafter. Indeed, New Divinity is *contradiction* itself reduced to a science. They also ascribe the change to the preacher and to the word. Mr. Finney undertakes to explain the co-operation of these several agencies; but the production of the change, essentially, is ascribed to the sinner. The influence of the Spirit of God, like that of the minister and the word, is restricted to mere persuasion or inducement. "The fact is," says Mr. F., "that the actual turning, or change, is the sinner's own act. The agent who *induces* him, is the Spirit of God. A secondary agent is the preacher, or individual that presents the truth. The truth is the instrument or motive which the Spirit uses to induce the sinner to turn." In pursuing his illustration, he adds, "Now, in speaking of this change, it is perfectly proper to say that the Spirit turned him, just as you would say of a man, who had persuaded another to change his mind on the subject of politics, that he had converted him, and brought

him over. It is also proper to say that the truth converted him; as in a case where the political sentiments of a man were changed by a certain argument, we should say that argument brought him over. So also, with perfect propriety, may we ascribe the change to the living preacher, or to him who had presented the motives; just as we should say of a lawyer who had prevailed in his argument with a jury, he has got his case, he has converted the jury. It is also with the same propriety ascribed to the individual himself, whose heart is changed; we should say that he had changed his mind, he has come over, he has repented. Now, it is strictly true, and true in the most absolute and highest sense, the act is his own act, the turning is his own turning, while God, by the truth, has induced him to turn; still it is strictly true that he has turned, and has done it himself. Thus you see the sense in which it is the work of God, and also the sense in which it is the sinner's own work. The Spirit of God, by the truth, influences the sinner to change, and in this sense is the efficient cause of the change. But the *sinner actually changes*, and is therefore himself, *in the most proper sense*, the author of the change."—p. 22.

The reader, with these explanations at hand, need have no difficulty in understanding what they mean, when they assert, with all the semblance of orthodoxy, that the Spirit of God is the "efficient cause" of regeneration. They mean nothing more than that the Holy Spirit converts the sinner, just as one man converts another when he persuades him to change his politics; or as a lawyer converts the jury when he gains his cause; while the sinner is in the "most absolute and highest sense," "in the most proper sense," the author of the change.

It is not necessary, in order to avoid this doctrine, to deny that the sinner has any thing to do in securing a change of heart. He is required to perform certain condi-

tional and preparatory acts, in view of which, God justifies and regenerates him. When he is called upon to make himself a new heart, the import of the obligation is, that he shall perform the prescribed condition; while the work of regeneration—of renewing the heart—is immediately and exclusively the work of God, as the Evangelist John affirms;—"But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The gross inconsistency in which Mr. F. involves himself, in exhibiting the doctrine of self-conversion, has been noticed in the discussion of another topic. To make out its practicability, he resolves the heart into a voluntary act or state of the mind. But this is a somewhat adventurous movement, both in divinity and philosophy. The Scriptures, which are the standard of Christian theology, and are unquestionably based on the true philosophy of mind, speak of the heart as belonging to the constitution of our nature, and as a source of our voluntary actions. To seem, therefore, to secure the suffrages of Scripture and reason, he defines the heart to be "that *deep-seated*, but voluntary preference of the mind, which *lies back of all its other* voluntary affections and emotions, and from which they take their character." Now the difficulty of self-conversion, supposing this very accommodating definition of the term *heart* to be correct, which however is denied, is this: this "voluntary preference of the mind" which constitutes the heart, is so "deep-seated" that it "lies back of all its other" voluntary actions, and gives them "their character." And yet, out of this preference, another volition is supposed to arise, which entirely changes the character of the preference from which it springs, and from which it first takes its character. This is the Ethiopian changing his skin to some purpose!

CHAPTER XVI.

MORAL SUASION.

ANOTHER distinctive feature of the New School theory is found in the doctrine, *that the Holy Ghost, in the regeneration of a sinner, employs no other influence than that of persuasion.*

This view of the mode of the Holy Spirit's operations naturally results from the doctrines of ability and regeneration, which we have endeavoured to refute. If one single act of the sinner's mind constitutes regeneration, and he has a natural ability to perform that act at any time, it is plain that all which is necessary to be done for him, in order to make him a Christian, is to *persuade him* to perform the act in question. And as no other influence is necessary, the Holy Spirit cannot be supposed to exert any other.

This doctrine is frequently inculcated. We will present a few examples.

The author of "Views in Theology" says, "As far then as human experience extends, there is *no other* medium known of influencing the voluntary actions of mankind than that of *moral suasion.*"—Part iii, p. 71.

Again: "*All* the means employed by the moral government of God to influence the voluntary actions of men, are the means of *moral suasion.* Their whole agency is expended in counteracting temptations by presenting inducements to holiness. So far therefore as that goes, it appears that *no other* medium is employed by the Most High to influence the conduct of men.—p. 72.

Again: "This follows from the fact that, as has been shown, the influence of motives is the *sole instrument* of determining the manner in which men act in regard to their obligations."—p. 77.

Again: "We are thus clearly taught in the volume of

inspiration, that the Spirit does exert an agency on the mind, that is employed in the communication to it of truth, and through that medium convicts, renews, and sanctifies it, *and thus produces all the various classes of effects* that are ever in the Scriptures attributed to his agency; and are taught it in statements and representations—not that are restricted by any reference to particular individuals, or circumscribed by applications to subordinate effects,—but that are wholly exempt from such limitations, and that accordingly by all just laws of construction, must be received as descriptive of *the only influence he employs* in producing these effects.”—No. 11, Vol. iii, p. 285.

Mr. Finney says, in his sermon on “Sinners Bound to Change their own Hearts,” “You see from this subject the nature of the Spirit’s agency. That he does not act by direct physical contact upon the mind, but that he uses his truth as his sword to pierce the sinner, and that the motives presented in the gospel are the instruments he uses to change the sinner’s heart. Some have doubted this, and supposed that it is equivalent to denying the Spirit’s agency altogether to maintain that he converts sinners by motives. Others have denied the possibility of changing the heart by motives. But did not the serpent change Adam’s heart by motives; and cannot the Spirit of God, with infinitely higher motives, exert as great a power over mind as he can? Can the old serpent change a heart from a perfectly holy to a perfectly sinful one, by the power of motives, and cannot the infinitely wise God do as much as Satan did?”

In this very extraordinary passage it is clearly inculcated, that the change which takes place in regeneration is strictly analogous to that which takes place in apostacy, and that the same mode of influence, namely, persuasion by the presentation of motives, is as competent to regenerate as it is to corrupt.

Mr. Duffield says, "In what his efficacy consists, is a question of deep interest, and in attempting to meet it, it becomes necessary to inquire whether the Spirit's agency is in the suasive influence of truth, or by some act of physical power irrespective of the appropriate influence of truth."—p. 481. In another place he remarks, "If you hope for a mighty creative power to be exerted upon you irrespective of your voluntary exercise, your hopes are baseless and visionary. The Spirit's efficacious agency is through the *suasive influence of truth*, and if you resist it, you resist *the only means* that you or any one else can hope to be exerted for you, to bring you to repentance."—p. 515.

But do they not explicitly and formally disavow the doctrine, that the Holy Spirit regenerates by "a persuasive exhibition of the truth analogous to the influence which one man exerts over the mind of another?" Do they not declare it to be their belief that regeneration is "produced by the *special* operations of the Holy Spirit?" Do they not assert that the Spirit's influences are *supernatural*, in reply to the charge of holding that those influences are restricted to moral suasion? They do. But they do not, nevertheless, deny the doctrine with which they are charged. The word "special" is a technicality well understood among them. They explain it so as to make it agree perfectly with the "moral-suasion" theory.

The author of "Views in Theology" tells us that "the distinction of the influences of the Divine Spirit into the classes of common and *special*; restraining, enlightening, regenerating, sanctifying, and comforting, is to be made *solely* on the ground that they occasion *such diversified effects*; not on the ground that they *differ* in their *nature*. For as his influences are *all* employed in presenting *motives* to the eye, they are of course always in *kind* the *same*. The difference in the effects of his agency, arises

from the *difference in the motives* through which he occasions those effects.”—Part iii, p. 89.

Mr. Duffield contends stoutly for a “*special*” influence, but his special influence does not differ in *kind* from that which one man exerts upon another. He says, immediately after giving an illustration of its specialty, “Shall we suppose that God cannot do with sinners, in reference to himself, *what one man has done with another?*—That a physical efficiency is necessary to make the sinner willing to confide in Him, and repent of his rebellion! To suppose so is, in fact, to attribute a moral influence to *man* more potent than that which, in such a case, *it would be requisite God should exert*. It would be in effect to say that *man* can subdue *his* foe, and by an appropriate moral influence convert him into a friend; but that God *cannot* convert his enemy, and bring him to believe, except he puts forth his physical power, and literally create him over again.”—p. 492.

So with the term “supernatural.” It has its explanation or explanations. But they all accord with the doctrine of regeneration by moral suasion.

The writer of “Views in Theology” says, “Restraint, conviction, sanctification, and comfort, *when they result immediately from the influences of the Holy Spirit*, are *supernatural* effects, in the same sense that regeneration is. The term is to be employed simply to express the fact, that the effect to which it relates is occasioned by the agency of the Spirit. It is *peculiarly* applicable to regeneration only on the ground that it never takes place except by the Spirit’s influence. The other effects undoubtedly do.”—Part iii, p. 89.

According to this explanation, it is sufficient to constitute any effect *supernatural* that it is produced by the Holy Spirit. The *same* effect produced by *other* influence is *not* supernatural; and the term, when applied to the

Spirit's influences, merely expresses the fact, that it is *his* influence, without determining its mode.

Mr. Duffield, however, seems to take a somewhat different view of the subject. "To say that the power of the Holy Ghost, in producing hope and faith, is his *creative efficacy*, lodging in the soul, 'a principle or disposition' that causes such exercises, is saying no more of it than what may be said of his power in creating the instincts, &c., of animals, and thus making his work in regeneration altogether *natural*, that is, like that in nature, not *supernatural*, which it is in fact—an influence exerted in pursuance of special design, and not uniformly and infallibly, according to fixed laws of nature."—p. 498.

According to this reasoning, the influence of the Spirit is not supernatural if it goes beyond moral suasion. But surely, these men are adventurous polemics, to undertake to convince us, that while mere *persuasion* is a supernatural process, there is nothing supernatural in *creation*. Notwithstanding the discrepancy between these writers, they both aim at reconciling *supernatural* influence with mere moral suasion.

This doctrine must necessarily share a similar fate with those which we have already examined, inasmuch as it grows out of, and depends upon them for support.

It is a valid objection, that it determines so positively and specifically the mode of the Holy Spirit's operations in regeneration—a subject which the Saviour declared to be wrapped up in impenetrable mystery.

The doctrine is supposed to be taught in those passages of Scripture which speak of the instrumentality of truth in a sinner's conversion: such for instance as these, "Of his own will begat he us with *the word of truth*." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the *word of God*, which liveth and abideth for ever." "Sanctify them through thy truth. Now are ye clean through the

word which I have spoken unto you," &c. But the question is not, whether the truth is employed in conversion and sanctification, but whether every other influence is excluded. These, and similar passages, no more prove that regeneration is accomplished by moral suasion merely, than those which attribute the production of the heavens and the earth to the word of God, prove that he created the universe by moral suasion. It is said, "By the *word of the Lord* were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap: he layeth up the depth in store-houses. Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him, for he *spake*, and it was done; he *commanded*, and it stood fast." "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed *by the word of God*, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the *word of God* the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth which are now, *by the same word*, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Here both the creation and conservation of the world are attributed to the word of God; but will any one infer from this fact that no other influence was exerted in their production than that of moral suasion? The resurrection of the body is also ascribed to the word of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall *hear the voice of the Son of God*; and they that hear shall live. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth." Will he then raise the dead by moral suasion?

We have seen that the conversion of the soul, the creation of the world, and the resurrection of the body, are all attributed to the word of God. Let us now inquire whether the change which takes place in the soul is not, like the creation of the world, and the resurrection of the body, ascribed to a power distinct from the word of God. The Apostle Paul writes to the Thessalonians thus: "For our gospel came not unto you *in word only*, but also in *power*, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Whatever the power may have been which *accompanied* the word, it is clearly distinguished from the word. To the Ephesians he says, speaking of the gospel, "Whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the *effectual working of his power*." In the same chapter he says, "Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to *the power that worketh in us*, unto him be glory in the Church by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end." Here "the power that worketh in us," is evidently contemplated as identical with that by which he is able to do all things. In his prayer for the Ephesians, in the first chapter of his epistle, he clearly identifies the power by which believers are renewed and sustained, with that by which he raised Christ from the dead. But it is not to the *word of God* that he attributes these effects in this instance, but to "the exceeding greatness of his power!" and "the working of his mighty power." Peter, in his second epistle, says, "According as his *divine power* hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue." These texts may serve as a specimen of the class to which they belong.

It may be objected here, that although these passages attribute the work of spiritual renovation to the *power* of

God, they do not determine the kind of power—the mode of operation, &c., whether it is the power of “moral suasion,” or power literally. To this it is replied that the language in these passages is equally strong and definite with that which is any where employed in attributing creation to the power of God. They speak of his “power, his divine power, his mighty power, the exceeding greatness of his power.” Where do the inspired writers use stronger or more definite language with respect to the creation of the world? It is not necessary to cite passages on this point. We feel assured that every one that might be adduced would be equally liable to the charge of indefiniteness, as to the kind of power exerted; and that the question might be raised, with equal propriety, so far as the language is concerned, whether creation was by moral suasion or “physical” power. Will it be rejoined, that the *nature* of the work determines what kind of power was concerned in creation? True; very true. And the nature of human depravity, and of the change effected in spiritual renovation, determines that the mode of the Spirit’s influence must be something more than mere persuasion.

We have not undertaken, in these reasonings, to determine specifically what is the mode of the Holy Spirit’s operation. Our object is simply to show how groundless is the supposition that it consists wholly in moral suasion—a supposition, which, it is presumed, no one would ever have professed to derive from the oracles of God, without having first adopted a system of theology or philosophy which imperatively demanded it.

CHAPTER XVII.

MORAL SUASION CONTINUED.

IN the argument of the preceding chapter it was proved that, so far as the language of Scripture is concerned, there is the same ground for concluding that the world was created, and that the dead will be raised, by moral suasion, as there is for the doctrine that the Holy Spirit regenerates the sinner by moral suasion.

It appears to be assumed by the advocates of the moral-suasion theory, that, in case it is rejected, the only remaining alternative is, that of holding that the Holy Spirit regenerates *independently of the truth*. This is not the case. Sufficient reasons may be assigned for the influence of motives in the sinner's conversion, while the direct and immediate operations of the Spirit of God, on the heart, may be equally necessary. It is true, that Calvinists of the Old School maintain that the truth has nothing to do with regeneration; that its office is to develop the principles implanted by regeneration; that, previous to regeneration, its only effect is that of irritating the spirit of rebellion. It is this view which gives to the reasonings of the New School party their plausibility and effect. But neither of the parties is right. They occupy extreme positions. The truth resides in the midway territory, which both have abandoned to Methodism.

But how, according to the doctrine of conversion by persuasion merely, can the influences of the Holy Spirit be at all necessary? Is it not the office of the written word and of the preacher, to persuade men? Perhaps it will be said, that the persuasions of the written word, and of the minister, invariably fail without the additional persuasions of the Holy Ghost. But whence arises the uniform failure of these instrumentalities and agencies? Is it because there is not a sufficiency of truth and motive in

the word, and at the command of the minister? Does the Holy Spirit make up the deficiency, by revealing truths and presenting motives, which are not contained in the Bible? To suppose this, would not only be to reflect on the word of God, as inadequate to the ends for which it was given, but likewise to run into the further difficulty of supposing that God makes immediate revelations of truth to rebellious sinners, beyond what is contained in the sacred oracles. Compare these propositions—1st, that no other influence is employed in regenerating the sinner than that of persuasion; 2d, that the sinner is fully able, at any time, without the grace of God, to yield to the influence of persuasion and become a Christian; and 3d, that the minister of the gospel is in possession of all the truth and motive, employed in the work of conversion, and there is, to say the least, a strong tendency to the inference that the influence of the Holy Spirit is not absolutely necessary, and that one man may convert another in the strictest sense of the word.

And although this inference may be disclaimed by the advocates of the theory under consideration, it cannot be denied that their instructions, in many instances, are calculated to make the impression that it is in the power of one man to convert another. In the work by Doctor Skinner and President Beecher, to which we have several times referred, there is the following direction, “Actually intend, by the divine blessing, to *convert sinners*. It is possible to converse on the subject of religion, without actually intending to *achieve the salvation of souls*. It is possible also to have this intention along with so little firmness, as to make all our efforts unavailing. We must *intend*, by the grace of God, *actually to achieve the conversion of the impenitent*; and not only so, we must fully and decidedly intend to do it. It must be the fixed purpose of our soul.”

We have no desire to conceal the fact that the Scriptures do, in some passages, speak of Christians as converting sinners from the error of their ways; but they require us to understand that the agency of Christians in this work is subordinate to that of God; and that the work is, after all, strictly and properly the work of God. They carefully guard us against the doctrine that it is properly the work of man. "But unto as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And there is no difficulty in supposing that one man may persuade another to perform those acts, which are conditional to his regeneration, and thus exercise a very important instrumentality, while the work of regeneration itself, may belong wholly to God, if it be allowed that some other influence is necessary and actually exerted, besides that of persuasion. But if no other influence than that of persuasion is necessary to the sinner's conversion, we cannot see how the deduction can be fairly obviated, that the additional influences of the Holy Spirit are not necessary, but that one man is fully competent to the conversion of another, without their interposition.

This doctrine presents to us another difficulty. If the conversion of the sinner is to be accomplished by moral suasion solely, and if the persuasions of the written word, and of the minister, are inadequate, we cannot understand how even the Holy Spirit can accomplish the task. Let us inquire, what is the difficulty which remains for the Holy Spirit to overcome? What is the cause of the uniform failure of the word and the minister? It is frequently intimated by the teachers of this doctrine, that while the Scriptures contain all the material of motive which is necessary for the purpose of conversion, provided the

sinner *would only attend to it*, he invariably refuses the attention necessary, and that this is the cause of the failure. This is expressly affirmed by Mr. Hinton. He says, "If the faculty of attention (to use this phraseology) shows how a man may be and do what he pleases, it will equally explain to us why, in so many instances, he is not what the state of things around him is adapted to make him; why his conduct is so often at variance both with his interest and his duty. This melancholy result arises from *inattention* to the more serious objects set before him. He sees them, but does not regard them. The perception of them is momentary; they are instantly forgotten, and therefore without influence. It matters not how momentous such things may be in themselves, nor how often they may be exhibited and perceived; if no attention be paid to them, or if the attention they are adapted to excite be withheld, they can exert no power. Trifles lighter than air will outweigh the most solemn topics, if the former be intently dwelt upon, and the latter banished from the thoughts."—p. 96.

Here we will venture to ask, since the subject is thus thrown open for inquiry, how the Holy Spirit is to effect the object of fixing the attention of the sinner, if no other influence is to be employed, but that of truth and motive? We are not at liberty to suppose that the divine agent accomplishes this object by revealing truth which is not contained in the Bible; and which is superior to that which is found in the Bible, in its adaptation to the work. Such a doctrine would carry us out to the utmost limits of fanaticism. Will it be said, (as no one individual is supposed to be acquainted with all the truth which God has revealed,) that, the Holy Spirit has a wide range in presenting to the mind that truth with which it was previously unacquainted, without going beyond the limits of Scripture? This suggestion, it is true, would avoid the diffi-

culty of teaching that the Holy Spirit reveals truths, which are not in the Bible, but it is encumbered with serious embarrassments. It as certainly teaches the doctrine of immediate revelation. The disclosure of the fact or proposition to the sinner, is as much a direct revelation as its disclosure to the prophet or apostle. And he may say of it what the Apostle Paul said of the gospel which he preached, when he asserted his inspiration, and vindicated his apostleship, "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Indeed, to adopt this view, would be to take refuge in one of the most exceptionable tenets of Quakerism. It will be time enough to refute it in this connection when it is actually proposed as the solution. At present we shall content ourselves with simply exhibiting it as an alternative. To avoid this alternative, we must suppose that the Holy Spirit presents to the mind, in the process of persuasion, such truths only as it has come in possession of by the usual means of information. If, then, the Holy Spirit presents directly to the mind of the sinner no other truths than those which have been presented by other means, and to which the sinner has all along refused his attention, we ask, what is there in the single circumstance of their being presented directly by the Holy Spirit, which may be relied on to fix his attention? Can he not as easily withhold it in the one case as in the other? Is not the probability of his withholding it equal in both cases? Has the rebellious sinner any special preference for the Holy Spirit, which lays the foundation of certainty that, while the truth will surely be neglected when presented by the minister, or read in the Bible, it will be instantly attended to when presented by the Holy Spirit?

Is it not just as certain that all the efforts of the Holy Spirit to excite attention will be defeated by a voluntary refusal on the part of the sinner, as that the efforts of the

minister will be defeated? Will it be said, at this point, that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent and omniscient, and can therefore present the truth at the most favourable time, availing himself of the most propitious conjuncture of circumstances? We have only to suppose that the minister of the gospel shall happen to present it at such a time, and the services of the Holy Spirit may be dispensed with, in that instance at least. Perhaps it may be insisted on, that while the Holy Spirit makes no revelation of truth, he presents it in a clearer light than does the written word or the minister. This seems to be the view which Mr. Finney takes: "Having direct access to the mind, and knowing infinitely well the whole history and state of each individual sinner, he employs that truth which is best adapted to his particular case, and then sets it home with divine power. He gives it such vividness, strength, and power, that the sinner quails, and throws down his weapons of rebellion, and turns to the Lord. Under his influence the truth burns and cuts its way like fire. He makes the truth stand out in such aspects, that it crushes the proudest man down with the weight of a mountain. If men were disposed to obey God, the truth is given with sufficient clearness in the Bible; and from preaching they could learn all that is necessary for them to know. But because they are disinclined to obey it, God clears it up before their minds, and pours in a blaze of convincing light upon their souls, which they cannot withstand, and they yield to it, and obey God, and are saved." Here the Holy Spirit is represented as making the truth effectual by giving it "vividness, strength, and power,"—by making it "stand out in such aspects," &c.,—by clearing "it up before their minds," and pouring "in a blaze of convincing light upon their souls, which they cannot withstand."

But here again we are in difficulties, on the supposition that no new truths are presented to the mind. How does

the Holy Ghost make the truth so much clearer to the mind of the sinner, than when it comes from the pens of those who wrote and spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and who gave it, not in the words which man's wisdom, but the Holy Ghost taught them? It must be remembered too, that the divine agent has the *human mind* to deal with. Suppose the sinner refuses his attention to the truth, as he has done before, how much clearer will it be to him? Besides, the effect of the truth, no matter by whom it may be presented, must be modified by the condition of the mind, as to ignorance or intellectual improvement. A proposition, presented to a cultivated mind, may strike it with much greater force than it would an uncultivated mind. How will the Holy Spirit go about making the proposition as clear to the man of uncultivated mind, as to the other? And how will he proceed to make it still clearer to the more intellectual man? Does the Holy Spirit give definitions of terms? Does he resort to formal illustrations, such as are not contained in the word of God, or presented by the minister? The only and universal obstacle to the success of the minister and the Scriptures, is supposed to be the indisposition of the sinner to obey, and the refusal of his attention; and we wish to know how the Holy Spirit is to overcome these obstacles by merely presenting the same truths? We can easily perceive that the Holy Spirit can arouse attention to the truth, if some other mode of influence than the mere presentation of truth be employed. And that he accomplishes this object by some other mode of influence, we firmly believe. Indeed, the passage quoted from Mr. F. derives its plausibility from intimations which it inconsistently contains, of the exertion of some other influence. He tells us that the Holy Spirit "employs that truth which is best adapted, &c., and then sets it home with *divine power*," and that "*under his influence* the truth burns and

cuts its way like fire." Here is a *power*, an *influence*, spoken of, which does not belong intrinsically to the truth, no matter how clear it may be. It is a *power* distinct from the truth, and with which God "sets home" the truth—an *influence*, under which "the truth burns and cuts its way like fire."

These difficulties are not unfelt by the advocates of the moral-suasion theory; and hence, earnestly as they insist on conversion by the presentation of truth merely, in some instances, we find them in other instances contradicting themselves and each other, and acknowledging its inadequacy; and asserting the intervention of some additional influence. Mr. Duffield writes, "But is this all the influence of the Spirit? Does his influence extend no further than the mere exhibition, in the word, of motives, arguments, objects, and considerations, calculated to move the heart, and change the will? The sacred Scriptures intimate something more than this. He does in this way strive with men *universally*, who hear the gospel, and sometimes with remarkable evidences of its influence, as in seasons of revival of religion, when almost every heart is made to quake, and every mind is impressed with the solemn conviction that God is in the midst of his people."—p. 482.

Compare this passage with the quotations from the same author in the chapter immediately preceding, and the contradiction will be too apparent for denial. He there says, "If you hope for a mighty creative power to be exerted upon you irrespective of your voluntary exercise, your hopes are baseless and visionary. The Spirit's efficacious agency is through the *suasive influence of truth*, and if you resist it, you resist *the only means* that you or any one else can hope to be exerted for you to bring you to repentance." He here affirms, not only that the agency of the Spirit is through the *suasive influence of truth*, but likewise, that

in resisting the influence of truth, the *only means* are resisted which God employs to bring sinners to repentance. We would also, at this point, remind the reader of the language already quoted from the author of "Views in Theology." "We are clearly taught in the volume of inspiration, that the Spirit does exert an agency in the mind that is employed *in the communication to it of truth*, and through that medium convicts, renews, and sanctifies it, and thus produces *all the various classes of effects* that are ever in the Scriptures attributed to his agency." This same doctrine is asserted by the editor of the New-York Observer, in the number dated August 11, 1837. "From another account it seems that tract distribution may be the means of a revival; and from another, that the ordinary preaching of the gospel on the sabbath may have that honour. We are not therefore confined to any one system of means. *The exhibition of divine truth*, for the purpose of saving souls, seems to be the *only indispensable requisite*; and this may be successful, whatever may be the form of exhibition!" The assertion of an influence additional to the truth is no doubt compelled by the exigencies in which they find themselves involved.

Mr. Hinton contends for an additional influence. He says, "The positions we have endeavoured, we trust successfully, to maintain in the preceding chapter are, first, that there is a personal and special influence of the Spirit superadditional to the word; and secondly, that such an influence is actually exerted in the conversion of the unrenewed, as well as in the sanctification of the renewed heart."—p. 59.

Let it not be supposed, however, that they have relinquished the doctrine of conversion by persuasion merely. They caution their readers against such a supposition. The "superadditional" influence, whatever it may be, is represented as strictly analogous to that which one man

frequently exerts on another. "What we have maintained," says Mr. H., "is, that attention to the word is induced otherwise than by the word itself, and that such inducement is to be attributed to the *suasion* of the Spirit of God. That there is ample foundation for the position, without exceeding the just analogy derived from the various modes of action of one human mind on another, we deem has been made apparent; and if that analogy were even exceeded by the Almighty Father of spirits, we do not perceive that such influence would be justly chargeable with being irrational. When the objector is prepared to say the *spirit of man* never influenced his mind without words, it will be time enough to admit the force of his objection to allow the Spirit of God an access to the mind distinct from the word of God."—p. 61.

Perhaps the reader will be ready to inquire what this "superaddition" influence is. We will endeavour to enlighten him, so far as we are enlightened, on the subject. Mr. Duffield says, "We see it in the impressions which a father has made upon his son, and trace its wondrous developments as that son may roam in distant lands." He speaks in this connection of "the winning influence of certain indications of affection, made by the twinklings of the eye, which rivet the heart." He tells us "there is a *sort of sympathy* between human spirits, which may be touched to produce emotion, with as much certainty as we can strike the chords of music, to secure the very sounds desired." And that "what, in these things we concede to man, must be attributed, in an infinitely greater degree, to that Spirit who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men."—p. 485.

Mr. Hinton remarks, on this point, "Who has not felt that the humble attitude and suppliant eye has a powerful influence to persuade, distinct from, though connected with the facts presented; or that proud and haughty de-

meanor induce the refusal of a request, which would otherwise have been cheerfully granted. If spirit, when clogged with mortal clay, has such methods of access to its fellow-spirit, who will be found bold enough to deny that methods equally silent, rational, and efficacious are possessed by that Spirit which breathed into us the living soul?"—p. 29.

It would seem, then, that the Holy Spirit fixes the attention of the sinner, and regenerates him; and thus makes up for the inadequacy of the truth, by making certain impressions which correspond with "the impressions which a father has made upon his son;" by "the winning influence of certain indications of affection" corresponding with those "made by the very twinklings of the eye;" by availing himself of some "sort of sympathy" between himself and the human spirit, "which may be touched to produce designed emotions;" and by some movement analogous to "the humble attitude, and suppliant eye," which have "a powerful influence to persuade." But he is not allowed to exert any other influence than that of persuasion after all; and his superiority over man, in the work of conversion, is to be attributed to his possessing these additional means of persuasion in a higher degree.

Such subterfuges as these, show plainly that those who resort to them are hard run. They are compelled to acknowledge, notwithstanding their positive assertions to the contrary, that the truth alone is inadequate to the sinner's conversion, and yet they are required to keep within the limits of mere suasion. They think, therefore, to supply the great desideratum by undefined "impressions," and the influence of *sympathy*, and *looks*, and *attitudes*, and take the responsibility of asserting, without a hint of authority from the Scriptures, that such is the influence which the Holy Spirit exerts.

The reader will, of course, form his own conclusions, but with me, the difficulty specified at the commencement

of the argument, remains in unabated force. I cannot see, if the written word and the ministry are insufficient for the conversion of the sinner, and no other influence be allowed than that of persuasion, how even the Holy Spirit can accomplish the work. The explanation just noticed is too futile for refutation.

Mr. Duffield intimates that there is something more than even the additional influence, described by him in the passages we have quoted. But what this "agency precisely is," he will not presume to say. He does not fail, however, to caution us against the supposition that it is any thing more than persuasion. His caution in not attempting to define this further agency, is commendable. He has now arrived at a point where he will do well to hide himself in the mysteriousness of his subject, and issue, from his concealment, a suitable rebuke to those who may impiously adventure to inquire into the mode of the Holy Spirit's operations.

We will conclude this chapter by noticing the argument contained in the quotation from Mr. Finney. He asks, "But did not the serpent change Adam's heart by motives; and cannot the Spirit of God, with infinitely higher motives, exert as great a power over mind as he can? Can the old serpent change a heart from a perfectly holy to a perfectly sinful one, by the power of motives, and cannot the infinitely wise God do as much as Satan did?" To this we answer, that, although Satan did corrupt our first parents by arguments and motives, it does not follow that they could be regenerated by the same means. Who does not know that it takes a much less power to corrupt than it does to sanctify? We have shown, we think, that it requires other influences to restore to holiness than motives merely. Nor will it follow that God cannot "do as much as Satan did," because he cannot change a heart from a perfectly sinful one to a perfectly holy one,

by the power of motives. Does Mr. F. believe that Satan could have changed the heart of Adam to holiness again, by the power of motives, or by *any* power? Would we not argue just as soundly as Mr. F., if we were to infer, that because a wicked man may corrupt a good man by motives, therefore a good man may surely sanctify a bad man by motives; and that, if this be not the case, the bad man can exert a greater power over mind than the good man, and thus relieve the Divine Being of the necessity of having any thing at all to do in the business?

CHAPTER XVIII.

PRAYER.

WE have now fully entered on that part of the investigation to which we have looked forward, as, by its own nature, invested with the most stirring interest to every believer in the doctrines of Methodism. To this point we have approached by slow and cautious advances, so as to be satisfied that we have cleared our way before us, and trodden on firm ground. And we are now prepared to charge on New Divinity the sentiment, that *for the sinner to pray to God for mercy, before he is regenerated, or, in other words, before he has become a Christian, is not only unnecessary, but actually rebellious.*

The doctrine results immediately from the positions we have just refuted. If one single act of the mind changes a man from an impenitent rebel to a Christian—if the very first act which conforms to the will of God, is that which secures or constitutes the great change, it is perfectly plain, that any act by which it is preceded must be at variance with the will of God. An attempt, therefore, to

pray to God before regeneration, must be accounted rebellious. This act must be classed with any other act performed under the same circumstances. It is the attempt of a wholly impenitent and unbelieving man to pray, who has, as yet, refused to surrender any one point to divine authority.

But it is not only by tracing the theory of New Divinity from its fundamental principles, along the line of intermediate deductions to the present point, that we arrive at this consequence. It flows immediately from the doctrine of natural ability, as held by the advocates of this scheme. For what shall the impenitent man pray? Shall he pray for the pardon of his sins? How can he expect that favour when he is fully able to do, at any moment, that which would make him a Christian, but perversely refuses to do it? Would not this be to ask God to forgive him while he prefers to continue in rebellion? Shall he pray for divine influence to assist him to repent and believe? This would be to ask God to help him to do that which he is able to do of himself, and which he is prevented from doing instantly, solely by unwillingness. It would be most barefaced and impudent rebellion. Thus we see that while prayer for pardon, spiritual influence, and regeneration, fully accords with the principles of Methodism, the principles of New Divinity construe it into a wanton abomination, or a gross delusion.

We shall now proceed to show, by quotations, that the advocates of this system are not unapprized of its bearings in this direction, and that they, on the contrary, adopt, and endeavour to sustain this inference in their public instructions.

Mr. Finney, in his lectures on "False Comforts for Sinners," specifies "telling the sinner to pray for a new heart," as a mode of administering false comfort. "I once heard," says he, "a celebrated Sunday school teacher do

this:—He was almost the father of Sunday schools in this country. He called a little girl up to him, and began to talk to her. ‘My little daughter, are you a Christian?’ No, sir. ‘Well, you cannot be a Christian yourself, can you?’ No, sir. ‘No, you cannot be a Christian. You cannot change your heart yourself; but you must pray for a new heart. That is all you can do; pray to God. God will give you a new heart.’ He was an aged and venerable man; but I felt almost disposed to rebuke him openly in the name of the Lord. I could not bear to hear him deceive that child—telling her she could not be a Christian. Does God say, ‘Pray for a new heart?’ Never. He says, ‘Make you a new heart.’ And the sinner is not to be told to pray to God to do his duty for him, but to go and do it himself.”—p. 318.

According to this statement, an aged and venerable man, almost the father of Sunday schools in this country, narrowly escaped an open rebuke from this apostle of New Divinity, for telling a little girl that she could not change her own heart, but must pray to God to change it. We are also authoritatively informed that God *does not require the sinner to pray for a new heart.*

This assertion of Mr. F. was made in full view of the prayer of the psalmist for a clean heart and a right spirit—and anticipating that it could be brought forward to refute his rash dogmatism, he goes to work to dispose of it: “I know that the psalmist, a *good man*, prayed, ‘Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.’ He had faith, and prayed in faith. But that is a very different thing from setting an absolute rebel to pray for a new heart.”

It will be perceived at once, that this attempt at argument is based on the assumption that there are no degrees of faith or repentance; that a man is either wholly unbelieving and an obstinate rebel, or a regenerate man. The

psalmist is justified by Mr. Finney on the ground that he was "a good man," and had "faith." Can it be possible that Mr. F. did not see the fatal absurdity into which he was about to plunge himself? What need had the psalmist to pray for a clean heart and a right spirit? Had he not changed his own heart? Was not his petition wholly superfluous? Besides, if the psalmist was not in possession of a clean heart, why did he not create it himself? Or has a "good man," who has faith, less power in this respect than an obstinate rebel, or an unconverted sabbath school girl, so that while these are able to change their own hearts and renew their own spirits, and have no right to call on God for help, the good man has not the power to do it, but must call on God to do it for him? Shame on the man who can deliberately advance and publish such nonsense on so sacred and awful a subject!

He also tells us that to direct the sinner "to pray for repentance," or "conviction," or "for the Holy Ghost to show him his sins," is to comfort him falsely.—p. 320.

As Mr. F. is looked upon as an ultraist, even in New Divinity, it may be supposed that he is solitary in his opposition to this Scriptural and indispensable practice. This is not the case. This leaven leavens the whole lump. Mr. Duffield says, evidently referring to the practice of Methodists, "Besides, this method of procedure is inconsistent with itself. The sinner is to be told 'that effectual help may be obtained by earnest entreaty'—that if he asks aright he will be heard. He cannot this very instant believe; he must not dare to do so in his own strength: he must be 'forbidden to attempt it,' but if he prays sincerely and fervently, help will be found. And this, with some, is 'preaching the whole counsel of God,' and to neglect to do so is 'keeping back the truth!!!' The first may produce, as it does among those who adopt the 'seeking' plan, a great deal of noisy excitement, and

in many cases the most fatal delusion, and abominable hypocrisy. We speak that which we have seen, and testify that which we do know. The other suggestion about praying aright, only tends to distract the sinner's attention, and turn it away from Christ to himself. He is put upon inquiry what it is to pray aright, and examining his own feelings, and it is morally impossible, in such a case, for the mind to wake up, under the influence of the great objects of our faith."—p. 547.

"But as he (the minister) would not throw the soul on the very threshold of the kingdom, immeasurably, and perhaps eternally back, *let him beware how he directs him to pray, or to use the means.*"—p. 548.

Before we proceed, it may be well to notice the suggestions which Mr. D. throws out, for the purpose of disparaging the "seeking plan," as he calls it. The doctrine, that effectual help may be obtained by earnest entreaty, "may" and "does" produce, among those who adopt the "seeking plan," "noisy excitements," "fatal delusion, and abominable hypocrisy." We shall be prepared to surrender the doctrine in question, when New Divinity has made us infidels, and not before. Is there any doctrine of the word of God more clearly and emphatically taught, than that help is to be obtained by prayer? Or is it *earnestness* in prayer that is so pernicious? Did not Jacob entreat earnestly, when, wrestling with the Angel of the covenant, he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me?" Did not the psalmist pray earnestly?—What does this language mean—"Forsake me not, O Lord; O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord God of my salvation?" *Psa. xxxviii.* He *called* upon God, and *cried unto him* with his voice. Was there not earnestness in the prayer of the publican, when he smote upon his breast and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Did not the Saviour pray with strong

cries and tears? Sometimes this earnestness produced a little "noisy excitement" too, as in the case of Bartimeus, which offended others, but in no instance incurred the disapprobation of the Saviour. As to delusion, we shall reserve what we have to say until we come to examine the tendencies of New Divinity in that direction. The objection, that telling the sinner "that if he asks aright he will be heard," "only tends to distract his attention, and turn it away from Christ to himself"—that "he is put upon inquiring what it is to pray aright, and examining his own feelings," and that "it is morally impossible, in such a case, for the mind to wake up under the great objects of our faith," is palpably fallacious. It lies equally against self-examination on any point. Is there no danger of the sinner taking that for submission which is not submission? Do not the preachers of New Divinity frequently detect in their converts the indulgence of "premature hopes?" And shall the sinner be forbidden to inquire what it is to repent or submit, or to "examine his own feelings," and acts, to see whether they accord with the requirements of God or not? Must he go on, and take it for granted that he is doing just what is right, and conclude that he is, of course, a Christian? And will the advocates of such a blind and headlong course as this, charge with a tendency to promote delusion, the doctrines which require that the sinner shall examine his motives and actions, and ascertain whether they are in accordance or at variance with the law of God? If Mr. D. will prove that it is impossible to pray otherwise than aright, we need not give ourselves nor the sinner any further trouble on the subject.

We will present another example from this author:—"Why then shall the sinner be told to *pray*, or to do any thing else, as though it could directly or indirectly conduce to his salvation, when at the moment he refuses to

believe? Is it true that asking and seeking are acceptable to God, unless there is faith? Does he not say, 'He that cometh unto God must believe that without faith it is impossible to please him'—'That whatsoever is not of faith is sin?' Here is a plain intimation that prayer on the part of the sinner cannot conduce either directly or indirectly to his salvation. The argument by which this opinion is attempted to be sustained, has been amply refuted. It proceeds on the principle, that the first *act* of faith, or any *degree* of faith, secures salvation. But if this be the case, there is no need, as we have shown, even to purpose to serve God, or to come to him, or to submit to him; because these acts presuppose faith, and are therefore superseded by it. "He that cometh unto God must believe that *he is*," &c., says the apostle. But admit that there are successive acts and various degrees of faith, and then it will appear sufficiently plain that the sinner may have more or less faith, and yet fall short of what is required of him; and that, for all this argument proves to the contrary, the prayer of the sinner may conduce to his salvation.

This same hostility to the sinner's praying for salvation is strongly expressed in a pamphlet, entitled "Narrative of a Revival of Religion in the Third Presbyterian Church of Baltimore. With Remarks on Subjects connected with Revivals in General. By W. C. Walton, Pastor of said Church."

He remarks, "Sinners are indeed often told they must repent or perish; but the guilt of neglecting to do this immediately is not sufficiently insisted upon. And when they are awakened, instead of having this duty urged upon them with all the force of divine authority, it is often taken for granted that they are already penitent, and they are pitied and prayed for as mourners, who are willing to be saved if God will only convert them; when their dis-

trass arises from nothing but the fear of hell, and the struggling of a rebellious heart against the duty of an immediate submission to God, on the terms of the gospel. In this state of mind the direction commonly given to them is, to *persevere in praying and using the means of grace*. This goes upon the assumption that God has somewhere promised to meet the sinner on this ground, and to bless him while he is unwilling to submit, and renounce his sins; and that merely because he is externally observing a divine institution. Such a promise it would be difficult to find. To persons in the state of mind here supposed, the word of God contains no promise of good, but many denunciations of evil. Evil is represented as ‘pursuing’ them. ‘Evil pursueth sinners,’ ‘God is angry with the wicked every day.’ They are ‘condemned already,’ and can never know at one moment that they will be out of hell the next. If, then, God has given them no promise of good while they remain impenitent rebels—and such they may be even when greatly distressed from the fear of punishment—it is clear that, in order to have any Scriptural ground to hope their prayers will be heard and accepted, they must, in the first place, cease from their impenitence and rebellion, by a cordial and unreserved submission to the terms of the gospel. What authority have I then to encourage them to hope that they will receive any answer to their *impenitent prayers*? Or to give them any direction, the tendency of which would be to make them believe that they are in the way to obtain religion, when they do not desire it, and are unwilling to have it on the only terms on which God will bestow it?”

The reader who has not been made acquainted with the sophistries of modern Calvinism would naturally infer from the preceding quotation, that some preachers—and the Methodists are evidently intended—are in the habit of directing “impenitent rebels,” who “do not desire re-

ligion, and who "are unwilling to have it," except on their own terms, to offer up "impenitent prayers" for religion, while their intention is not to submit, but to live in sin, and that the writer was merely opposing such a course. It is this aspect of the argument which gives it all its plausibility. There may possibly be such teachers in existence, but we know not where they are to be found. This is certainly not the practice of the Methodists. But a little attention will disclose the reason of their imputing this conduct to those who direct the sinner to "call on the name of the Lord" that he may "be saved." They proceed on the supposition that one single voluntary act of the mind changes a man in one moment from an impenitent rebel to a Christian—that the very first act of penitence, or faith, or submission in any form, is sufficient—that if a man is not a Christian, and in possession of salvation, it is because he is wholly impenitent, and does not even desire religion. Of course, in their view, to direct any man to pray for salvation, or in order to become a Christian, is to direct an impenitent rebel to pray; for there is no medium between total impenitence and holiness. If he has the least degree of penitence he has no need to pray for salvation. This is the principle on which the writer argues. It can hardly be necessary to repeat our views on this subject. We go on the ground that there are successive acts, and various degrees of repentance and faith—that prayer belongs to repentance as one of its acts, and that the man who refuses to pray for salvation, refuses to repent fully and effectually. We no more encourage sinners to pray insincerely, than to feign repentance.

This writer adds, "The error I am now combating seems to arise from the erroneous supposition, that when the sinner is awakened, and begins to reform his external conduct, and to use the means of grace, his heart is grow-

ing better in the sight of God ; that he is becoming less and less unworthy ; and that by this gradual diminution of his unworthiness, he is making a gradual approximation to a right state of feeling. Hence the direction, ‘ Continue praying—persevere—you are in a hopeful way—after awhile you will obtain religion,’ ” &c.

It will be perceived at once that this is aimed at Methodism. While it discloses to us the author’s sentiments, it affords us an opportunity of replying to his imputations. The sinner is not urged to pray, and persevere, and told that he is in a hopeful way, on the supposition that he is making himself *worthy* of the blessing he seeks. But it is supposed that he is making advancement toward that state of feeling which God requires, or the direction would not be given. It is supposed that the use of those means contributes to that degree of penitence and faith, in connection with which, God has placed the blessings of pardon and spiritual renovation. And surely the heart that is in some degree penitent, and whose penitence is increasing, is not in a worse condition than that which is wholly impenitent. Shall we suppose that the atheist grows worse and worse, as he is led successively to believe in a God, and in all the articles which compose the Christian faith ? The fact that God has promised salvation to those who are in a certain state of mind, proves that their case becomes more hopeful as they approximate to that state of mind. The doctrine of New Divinity is, that every effort that a man makes to obtain religion makes him worse and worse, drives him further and further away from God, until all at once, without a single preparatory step, he turns round, quick as thought, and makes himself a Christian, which he could as easily have done at any other period. We leave it with the reader to decide which of these views is most compatible with Scripture and reason.

Mr. Hinton, in his work entitled "The Active Christian," a book containing many excellences as well as errors, says in describing "cases of ill-directed effort" on the part of awakened sinners, "Now none of these pleasing appearances exercise a more delusive influence than prayer. To a very great extent a notion prevails, that sinners may be saved by prayer, and there is something so excellent in prayer itself, and, considered as a spiritual exercise, so much identified with the existence of sincere piety, that many persons have either imbibed the sentiment, or are startled with the opposite. To me it appears one of the simplest and most obvious truths, *that no man can be saved by prayer*. If it be a spiritual exercise (which is far from being always the case) it may be like holiness, an evidence of salvation, *but not the instrument of it*. *It is not that which a sinner is to do in order to be saved, or that by which he can be saved*. *It does nothing toward his salvation, but leaves the question of acceptance or wrath just where it was*. Now, if prayer might always be taken as an evidence of piety, it would be an unscriptural and mischievous thing to confound the evidences with the method of salvation. But, as I have just hinted, prayer is by no means uniformly a spiritual exercise. Much of it is formal, and much that is not formal is natural—the utterance of an awakened but not of a subdued heart. This is even no evidence of piety; and yet it is the prayer by which multitudes hope to be saved. It is not only a truth, therefore, but a very important truth, that a sinner cannot be saved by prayer; that if prayer be unaccompanied with submission to God, it leaves him under condemnation; that if it be accompanied with submission to God, it is not prayer that saves him, but submission; and that reliance placed on prayer serves only to blind him to his condition, and to render prayer itself the instrument of his ruin.

“It is the more material that prayer should be set in its true light, because by many persons it is regarded, not merely as that which will save them, but as the only thing which is requisite or possible for them to do in reference to their salvation. ‘If prayer does not answer the end,’ they are ready to say, ‘What can we do more?’ And as it uniformly happens that prayer does not answer an end for which it is unscripturally and inappropriately used, it hence follows that they conclude they have nothing else to do, and make themselves satisfied in a state of sin and condemnation; as though they would say, ‘I have prayed to God, and that is every thing; and now if I am not converted and saved it is not my fault.’ It is evident that in such a state of mind, the attention of the sinner is withdrawn from all Scriptural views of duty, and from every impulse to right action. The Scripture speaks of humbling ourselves before God, of repentance, of godly sorrow, of submission to Christ’s righteousness, all of which are thus most unjustly and injuriously superseded by prayer, an exercise by the performance of which, in whatever manner, a sinner deems himself exonerated from all obligation to these Scriptural and essential duties. Instead of being useful, the very exercise of prayer becomes in this method a tremendous mischief. I do not need here to be told of the fallen and helpless state of human nature, or of the thousand encouragements to prayer which are contained in the divine word. Admitting these most readily, I must maintain also that it is a sinner’s direct and immediate duty to turn to God, and submit to his Son, a duty from the obligation and necessity of which a whole century of prayer could not relieve him. Make it your business, dear brethren, to see that no person under your instruction shall ruin himself by this melancholy delusion.”

This author finds it necessary, like all the rest of his school, to caricature the doctrine he opposes, in order to

the success of his opposition. "To a very great extent," he says, "the notion prevails that a sinner *may be saved by prayer*." "By many persons it is regarded, not merely as that which will save them, but as the *only thing* which it is either requisite or *possible* for them to do in reference to their salvation." They think that by the performance of this exercise, *in any manner*, a sinner is "exonerated from all obligation" to the "Scriptural and essential duties of humbling himself before God, of repentance, of godly sorrow, of submission to Christ's righteousness." It can hardly be necessary to deny that those who direct the sinner to pray for mercy, entertain such views of prayer. They look upon prayer as *one* of those exercises which God has enjoined on the sinner as the means of obtaining salvation, and suppose that the neglect of it will be equally fatal with the neglect of any other duty.

We readily grant that the sinner may entertain mistaken views of the nature and efficacy of prayer. In such a case it will be important that his views be corrected. But the liability to delusion respecting prayer, is no greater than the liability to delusion respecting any other exercise. A man may as easily suppose "worldly sorrow" to be "godly sorrow." He may as easily suppose that to be repentance which is not repentance. But the author is not so much concerned to correct the *manner* of the sinner's praying. It is *prayer itself*, on the part of an awakened sinner, as a means of grace, that he is opposing. "It is not that which a sinner is to do in order to be saved." "It does nothing toward his salvation." "It may be, like holiness, an evidence of salvation, but *not the instrument of it*." "If prayer be unaccompanied by submission to God, it leaves him under condemnation; if it be accompanied with submission to God, it is not prayer that saves him, but submission." So that prayer is wholly unnecessary. Indeed we are told "that reliance placed upon prayer

serves only to blind him to his condition, and to render prayer itself the instrument of his ruin." The sinner may fall into other mistakes, but "none of these pleasing appearances exercise a more plausible and delusive influence than that of prayer."

As to prayer superseding other duties, it may as well be pretended that godly sorrow supersedes repentance, or repentance faith, or faith "submission." But what is the "submission" to which such all-absorbing importance is attached? The author seems to speak of it as a separate exercise. But in what part of the word of God is submission enjoined as a particular exercise? Where is it said, "He that submits shall be saved?" Prayer is distinctly specified as the sinner's duty: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, *call upon him* while he is near." That submission is necessary is not questioned. No man can be saved until he submits. But does one particular exercise constitute submission, or does it include a variety of exercises? New Divinity delights in vague and ambiguous terms. The sinner inquires what he shall do to be saved. These teachers tell him to submit. This he professes a willingness to do, but wants to know what it is to submit. He is told that to submit is to do what God requires of him. "But what does God require of me?" is the natural response to such sage instruction: "Must I pray to him? What must I do?" "No, you must not pray, you must submit to God." How very luminous! And so simple too!! 'There surely can be no great danger of delusion here!!! Now those who direct the sinner to *pray*, enjoin submission just as much as the advocates of New Divinity. They hold that submission includes a variety of exercises, and that prayer is one of them—and one of leading importance. They therefore enjoin it as an essential part of submission. There may be prayer without entire submission, but there cannot be

entire submission without prayer. The New School divines leave out of their doctrine of submission, duties which God has peremptorily commanded. God has enjoined prayer, but they forbid it, and enjoin submission. What is this but substituting rebellion for submission? The submission which they enjoin is downright rebellion. It may be submission to Messrs. Finney, Duffield, Hinton, or to other New Divinity teachers; but it is not submission to God. The truth is, that prayer, so far from superseding other duties, is directly promotive of them—while the sinner who does not pray will not humble himself, will not repent, will not believe, will not be saved. Mr. H. intimates that prayer does not answer the end for which it is used by those who resort to it as a means of obtaining mercy and salvation. Will Methodists believe this? O, how many thousand tongues are ready to contradict the assertion!

CHAPTER XIX.

PRAYER CONTINUED.

It will be perceived, from the extracts quoted and commented upon in the preceding chapter, that while the advocates of New School theology condemn every act as unnecessary or rebellious—as “resisting the last hope of a lost soul”—which falls short of the one single act that regenerates, they have a special antipathy to prayer for pardon and regeneration. The question before us is one of immense importance. If the doctrine of our opponents be true, then do the Methodists, with one voice, enjoin on all who inquire the way of salvation, an exercise which is not only unnecessary, but highly prejudicial to

their spiritual interests. It may be supposed by some of our readers that the examples which we have presented to prove that this doctrine is held and taught by those to whom we impute it, are sufficiently pointed and numerous; but we beg leave to call their attention to one more writer on this subject, the Rev. Charles Fitch. We have before us a book entitled "Inquirer's Guide," published by Mr. Fitch, while pastor of the "Free Congregational Church," in Hartford, to which our attention was recently directed by a member of the New-York Conference, who had met with it in his pastoral visitations. It is designed for inquirers particularly, as the title indicates. We hesitate not to affirm that it contains spiritual poison—rank and deadly. We would warn all inquirers, within the circle of our influence, against trusting themselves to its delusive guidance.

The book professes to illustrate truth by facts, and contains several narratives, in which its doctrinal peculiarities are exhibited. One of them introduces two cousins, Mary and Juliet, as the leading personages in the history. They were returning from prayer-meeting together. " 'We will not go to sleep to night,' said Mary to Juliet, as they were returning from the prayer-meeting, 'until we have given our hearts to God.' They reached home, and retired immediately to their room, to fulfil their resolutions. After praying alternately for some hours, they called the lady of the house from her bed, and requested her to go to their room. She did so, and then asked what was their wish. 'That you will pray for us,' was the reply. 'And for what shall I pray,' asked the lady. 'O!' said they, 'that we may have new hearts.' She complied with their request; and on retiring from the room, she heard one of them say, 'How shall we know that we have new hearts?' 'We will pray,' said the other, 'until we *do* know.' Thus they continued praying until they felt

within them they had given their hearts to God, and were ready to devote their lives to his service."

The author of the book does not question the genuineness of the change which took place in these persons. "There are few," he says, "whose piety has been more consistent than that of Mary and Juliet." But he objects to the course they pursued, and in stating his objection he develops the pernicious tendencies of his theory.

He says, "In the resolution formed by Mary and Juliet, they did wrong in but one thing. Instead of saying, We will give our hearts to God before we sleep, and then waiting until they could go home to their chamber to do it, they should have said, We *will now*—we *do now* give our hearts to God, where we are—before we take another step—before we draw another breath. From this instant, and for evermore, we will love God and him only, and serve him with all our powers until we die; trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, that our multiplied sins will be forgiven through the merits of his atoning blood. They had no means of knowing that God would let them live until they could go home to their chamber; they were presuming on a time to make their preparation, which might never come. Instead of withholding their hearts from God so long, *and spending these hours in praying for themselves*, they should have yielded at once, and gone home to pray for the Holy Ghost to be poured out upon their young companions, who were yet living in sin. They might have come to the full, unreserved, and heartfelt resolution to love God and obey him for ever, at any previous moment, just as well as when they actually did. It was *not necessary* for them to offer *all these prayers* to prevail with God and make him willing that they should have new hearts. God was more than willing; he was strongly desirous that they should have new hearts, before one of those prayers had been offered; and the only thing to be

done by them toward obtaining new hearts, was just to consent sincerely and heartily, to love God and obey him. All this they had to do, after all their prayers."

"If Mary and Juliet had not done this—if they had not fully determined that they would for ever love and serve their Maker with all their powers, they might have *prayed* until now, and they would have been *impenitent sinners* still, and on the road to death. Their resolution that they would, on that night, give themselves to God, was a good one, except that they ought to have resolved on doing it much sooner, and ought to have given their all away to Christ, as they were walking by the way, and thus have gone home his true disciples. They might have done it, and were exceedingly guilty for not doing it: and if God had cut them off in sin, while on their way to their dwelling, and consigned them to eternal death, it would have been altogether righteous."—p. 58.

In these quotations we have (clearly presented) the following doctrines: 1st, That the prayers of these cousins, for new hearts, were wholly unnecessary. 2dly, That whatever may be included in giving the heart to God and becoming Christians, may be done in one moment—"before we draw another breath"—"before we take another step." 3dly, That while "the cousins" were praying for new hearts, they were "*impenitent sinners* still, and on the road to death." 4thly, That to "come to the full, unreserved, and heartfelt resolution to love God and obey him for ever," or "*just to consent* sincerely and heartily to love God and obey him," or to "*fully determine* that they will for ever love and serve their Maker with all their powers," which may be done by "*impenitent sinners*" in a moment, is "the only thing to be done by them toward obtaining new hearts."

Is it not clear that if, at the first, Mary and Juliet had concluded that their hearts were already given to God, by

the resolution they had formed ; and, omitting the hateful business of praying for new hearts, had “indulged a hope,” and prayed for their young companions, they would have escaped Mr. F.’s censures, and all would have been right.

Mr. F. does not, however, “put forth half his strength” against prayer in this part of his book, but “checks his thunder in mid-volley.” In a second narrative, entitled “God is willing that Sinners should be Saved,” he comes out as follows :—“E. P. was hopefully converted under the following circumstances : A protracted meeting was in progress, and his attention was called to his eternal well-being—but he had not yielded his heart to God. At this time a sermon was preached from the following text : ‘Whoso turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.’ It was remarked by the preacher that ‘there was nothing upon which anxious sinners usually placed more value than upon their prayers—thinking that by these they should prevail with God to have mercy on them, and thus secure salvation!’ It was also said, ‘that these impenitent prayers were frequently the last thing which the impenitent were willing to give up, before they left all, and trusted in Christ.’ It was stated that there was ‘*no necessity for impenitent sinners to pray that God would have mercy on them,*’ and that ‘such prayers were an abomination, when they were offered.’ These two points were made to appear by the following illustration : ‘A thief is arraigned at the bar of his country, and condemned to state’s prison for life. After his sentence he sends up a petition to the legislature for a pardon. They consider his case, and resolve that if the man will acknowledge his crime, and pledge himself to render obedience to the laws of his country in future, he shall be set at liberty.

“This decision is made known to the man, but he at once replies, ‘I shall do no such thing as they say, I do

not ask for conditional pardon. I wish to be set at liberty, and left free in future to steal or not, as I choose.' He sends this answer to the legislature, and accompanies it with another earnest prayer for pardon. But the legislature, so soon as his petition is read, reply with one voice, We can have nothing more to do with that man's case. We have disposed of it. We have once decided, that if he will acknowledge his crime, and pledge himself to obey the law, he is pardoned. We have no more to do with his case.' But the man still refuses to comply with the conditions; and again, with more earnestness than before, sends up a prayer for pardon. He repeats it time after time. He becomes apparently very much distressed. He portrays before them the horrors of a prison, and tells them how much he suffers at the thought of running out his whole life within the gloomy walls of a dungeon; but in the midst of all his distress, he absolutely refuses either to confess his crime, or to give the pledge of future obedience to the law.

"Now it will be seen that this man's petitions are clearly useless. There is no necessity for them. The legislature have already resolved that they will pardon him, on the only conditions which can be consistent with the rights of the community; what need is there then of his praying? It is evident the only object of his prayers must be to induce the legislature to alter the conditions on which they have agreed to pardon him.

"But can they do this? Can they consistently set him at liberty, with full knowledge of the fact that he intends to steal whenever he may choose? Will not his prayers in such a case be most clearly an abomination? The legislature would soon become weary of them, and probably refuse to hear them. That man turns away his ear from hearing the law. There is no necessity that he should continue to ask for mercy. The pardon has been

presented, and now, if he will comply with the terms, which all must see are reasonable, he can have his liberty. Just as long as he continues to pray, he will be more and more an abomination.

“ ‘Precisely such,’ it was stated, ‘is the case of the sinner toward God. God has already said in his word, ‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon.’ It is also said, ‘Whoso covereth his sins shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsaketh, shall have mercy.’

“ ‘But so soon as the sinner sees that he is in danger of sinking to hell, he begins to cry out for mercy. *What need of this?* God has said, beforehand, ‘He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins, *shall have mercy.*’ *Why does he pray?* Does he expect God will have mercy on him while he does not confess and forsake his sins? He may pray as long as the rich man did for water, and he will be sure to obtain nothing. He might offer such prayers as these to all eternity, and God would never hear. Why does he not confess and forsake his sins, and then he would be sure of mercy—sure of free forgiveness and everlasting life.

“ ‘But he becomes very much distressed. He sheds burning tears as he looks into hell, and rolls upon his pillow at night, as sleep departs from his eyelids, and begs of God to save his perishing soul. He spends whole days thus, and perhaps flatters himself, that the more he prays, the more likely he will be to obtain salvation. Still, however, while he keeps on praying, he altogether refuses to confess and forsake his sins. Must not such prayers be an abomination? God has told him already that he is willing to have mercy on him. *There is, therefore, no need to pray for it.*

“ ‘The sinner turns away his ear from hearing the law. He will not obey in the thing which God requires, though he prays with great earnestness, and thinks to prevail. God will let him pray eternally, but will curse his soul for every prayer he offers, until he will do the thing required of him—that is, confess and forsake his sins.

“ ‘The longer he prays thus, the more abominable must he become in God’s sight. He is merely begging of God to forgive him, and take him to heaven, while he continues to be a rebel. *Let him leave off his ungodly prayers*, and do the thing which God requires of him, and then his soul will be saved. After this he may pray, and God will hear him; but God hears no man’s prayers who will not confess and forsake his sins.’ ”

“ E. P. felt the force of this truth. He felt willing to give up his sins, and consecrate himself to the service of God; and in doing this he found peace.

“ Sinners should be directed to do what God has made necessary to salvation. It is nowhere said in the Bible, that if the impenitent sinner will pray, he shall be saved: nor is there any evidence that God places any value upon his prayers, when they are offered.

“ The first thing which sinners have to do, is to repent—that is, confess and forsake their sins, and every thing is an abomination until this is done. This they will never do while they think any thing else will answer in its place. They cannot, therefore, too soon be made to feel that all their prayers and tears, and eternal reformations, are wholly useless, until they will acknowledge their transgressions to God, and enter at once upon the full discharge of all the duties which he requires. To tell the sinner to pray, when God has commanded him ‘to repent and turn himself from all his transgressions,’ is to handle the word of God deceitfully, and daub with untempered mortar.”—p. 98.

The reader will keep in mind the object for which we make these quotations. They are intended to show that the inference which we have deduced from other parts of the New School theory, namely, that for the sinner to pray for forgiveness and regeneration is unnecessary and rebellious, is recognised, and held and taught as a doctrine, by the advocates of that theory. Additional testimony is unnecessary. This point is abundantly substantiated. Indeed, we would have satisfied ourselves with much less extensive extracts, were we not apprehensive that the charity of many would render them reluctant to believe that a doctrine, penetrating so far into the regions of destructive error, could be held by persons maintaining such a show of zeal and spirituality, as must be placed to the credit of many New School churches.

The fallacy of this author's reasoning is easily detected. He opposes prayer for salvation, on the part of the unconverted, on the ground, first, that they are impenitent; secondly, that they are unnecessary. The case of the sinner who prays for pardon is "precisely similar," in his estimation, to that of the thief, who sends his petition to the legislature for a pardon, and who, when informed that the legislature have resolved to pardon him on the condition that he will acknowledge his crime, and promise future obedience to the laws, replies that he "shall do no such thing"—he does "not ask for a conditional pardon"—he wishes "to be set at liberty, and left free in future, to steal or not, as he shall choose"—and who sends this answer to the legislature, accompanied with another petition for pardon.

Now we honestly declare that in all our experience we never met with a case like this. During a ministry of several years, we have been in the habit of urging sinners to pray for mercy, and have seen many kneel down before God for that purpose; resume their posture of supplica-

tion from time to time ; rise from their knees assured that the anger of God was turned away ; and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We have seen the genuineness of their conversion attested by holy lives and triumphant deaths. But had we met with any of those presumptuous rebels, described by Mr. F., instead of encouraging them to expect pardon in answer to their insulting petitions, we should have feared that God would strike them dead, and send them to hell instantly. We would have endeavoured to arouse them to a sense of their danger, by such language as this :—"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell!"

Mr. F. is not guided in his estimate of the character of those who pray for pardon and regeneration, by the facts of the case, but by his misleading theory. He assumes that the very first act which is in the least degree conformed to the will of God—the first act, or degree, of repentance or faith—is sufficient to secure pardon ; and then very consistently infers that the sinner who prays for pardon obstinately refuses to perform that act, and is therefore wholly impenitent. If he would only perform that act, his prayer would be unnecessary. "God has told him already, that he is willing to have mercy on him. *There is, therefore, no need to pray for it.*" By this theory would Mr. F., and the advocates of New Divinity generally, undertake to explain all those cases of deep and agonizing repentance which have not yet resulted in actual and ascertained forgiveness. "The sinner sees that he is in danger of sinking into hell," and "begins to cry out for mercy," while he wilfully refuses to perform that one act which God requires of him, and which he can perform before he "draws another breath." "He becomes very much distressed. He sheds burning tears as he looks into hell, and rolls upon his pillow at night, as sleep departs from his eyelids, and begs God to save his perish-

ing soul. He spends whole days thus, and perhaps flatters himself that the more he prays, the more likely he will be to obtain salvation. Still, however, while he keeps on praying, he altogether refuses" to do that one single act which is required of him. Hence, of course, his prayers are "an abomination." "The longer he prays thus, *the more abominable* he must become in God's sight. He is merely begging of God to forgive him and take him to heaven while he continues to be a rebel. Let him leave off his ungodly prayers," and do the thing which God requires, and his soul will be saved. "God will curse him for every prayer he offers" before he is converted. Let the sinner, then, who desires salvation, beware how he prays for it! Whatever else he may do, let him avoid prayer as he would avoid cursing! And as the advocates of this theory may be too modest or too charitable to make the following legitimate application of it, we will make it for them:—Let the sinner who desires to be saved, shun the Methodist Church as he would shun the gates of hell; for they pursue, throughout the whole extent of it, the practice of directing awakened sinners to pray for pardon and salvation, and, to all appearance, are likely to be incorrigible in the maintenance of their atrocious system.

It is remarkable that the teachers of New Divinity, in specifying that one act which God requires of the sinner, vary their terms as the argument may seem to require. At one time they speak of "faith" as the thing required—at another time, "repentance"—at another, "willing," or "choosing," or "resolution"—at another, "confession of sin," or "forsaking it." This is the way with Mr. F. When speaking of "the cousins," all that is necessary is to come to the "*resolution* to love God and obey him for ever." In the case of the thief, that which is necessary is to acknowledge his crime, and pledge himself to

obey the law. And now we are told that the reason why the sinner is not saved is, he refuses to "confess and forsake his sins." But we have shown that the system which we are opposing, renders nearly all these acts unnecessary. This is eminently the case with confession of sin. It is the act, either of a penitent or an impenitent sinner. If of an impenitent sinner, it is, like prayer under the same circumstances, an act of rebellion—if of a penitent sinner, it is, like prayer, quite unnecessary. We refer the reader for a more full development of this argument to the fourteenth chapter.

Whatever others may think, it strikes us as a very remarkable thing, if indeed it be the case, that the impenitent sinner should have such a strong preference for prayer. According to the representations of these men, the sinner will "cry to God for mercy"—"beg of God to save his perishing soul"—"spend whole nights thus"—"shed burning tears," and pass sleepless nights—publicly approach the altar, or mourners' bench, and remain there for hours, struggling in earnest prayer; and all to avoid doing—what? Merely resolving to serve God, or willing to be a Christian, or exercising the least degree of repentance, which may be done by any man in a single moment! "These impenitent prayers," we are told, are "the last thing which the impenitent are willing to give up." We are quite incapable of sympathizing with our New Divinity friends in their troubles on this point. Our difficulties are of a directly opposite character. We find it very hard work to induce sinners to pray, and keep them to their duty in this matter. And our difficulties, in many places, are not a little increased by the influence of New Divinity. Sinners are not easily persuaded to submit to the severe and humiliating terms of the gospel, as understood by the Methodists, unless their hearts are broken by convictions. It will afford them great relief to be

assured that they can be converted by merely making up their minds to be Christians—an act which the Methodists enjoin as imperatively as do the New School, but which they consider only a part of what is required. Sinners do not pray thus because they prefer the exercise, but because they believe the word of God requires it; and the difficulty of which these teachers complain arises from this conviction. They have undertaken the task of persuading the awakened and inquiring man to surrender his belief in the plainest instructions of the Bible, and to rely on a theory at which his common sense takes alarm—and I would to God that they may find far more difficulty. But, unhappily, they have on their side whatever remains of pride, of indolence, of depravity in any form.

It is very convenient for them to represent the praying sinner as desiring mercy and heaven, while he has no desire for holiness. Thus does Mr. Fitch. Mr. Walton does the same: so do they all. But we have seen that they are no better pleased when the sinner prays that God would create in him a clean heart. “Does God say, Pray for a new heart? Never!” asks, and exclaims Mr. Finney.

Mr. Fitch assumes that repentance and prayer for mercy are incompatible. To tell the sinner to pray, when God has commanded him “to repent and turn himself from his transgressions,” is to “handle the word of God deceitfully, and daub with untempered mortar.” Hold! To forbid the sinner to pray, because God has commanded him to repent, is to countermand the awful and irrevocable edicts of Heaven. Let him that does it, beware!

And while this system has been advancing to maturity, how many, who reject it as poison when they understand it, have been delighted with the deceitful imagination, that its advocates were approaching to the peculiarities of Methodism.

We have already answered the argument, drawn from the supposed impenitence of the praying sinner. On this point we will add, if every act performed by an impenitent man is an impenitent act, and therefore rebellious, and yet God requires the impenitent man to do something in order to be saved, it follows inevitably that every impenitent sinner must be damned. Because every effort he makes must be an impenitent effort, and must therefore leave him in a worse condition than before.

CHAPTER XX.

PRAYER CONTINUED.

WE propose to examine the objection to the sinner's praying for mercy, which is deduced from the willingness of God to save. Mr. Fitch is not solitary in his reliance on it; if he were, we should attach less importance to it. It is frequently thrown out by other writers and speakers of the same school, although not often so fully developed as in the instance before us. Mr. Duffield, in his argument on the same subject, says, "To counsel the sinner in any other way, and to put him upon efforts, as it were to turn God to him, is taking part with the sinner against God, fostering the spirit of rebellion, and practically slandering the God of love. It is the sinner that must be turned. *God is willing to save him.*"—p. 549.

This futile objection lies equally in the way of the performance of any other conditional act. It may as well be argued that we confess our sins to make God willing to save us; and therefore that confession of sin is "practically slandering the God of love." If God has placed prayer among the terms of forgiveness, it is necessary for

that reason ; if he has not, it is unnecessary. - The well-instructed inquirer prays for mercy on the same principle on which he performs any other exercise which God has commanded. Is it written, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins?" It is also written, "They that call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

But trifling as is this objection, it belongs to the system of New Divinity, and we proceed to trace its consequences. If the sinner is not to pray for his own salvation, because God is willing to save him, for the same reason he should decline prayer for the salvation of others. If, for instance, "Mary and Juliet" had gone and prayed that God would have mercy on their young companions, would not the act have implied the unwillingness of God to save sinners, just as much as prayer offered for themselves?

And shall we be believed when we affirm that this theory is actually pushed, in its practical application, up to this very point? In this book,—*"The Inquirer's Guide"*—written expressly for the direction of those who ask what they shall do to be saved, is this strange doctrine strenuously inculcated.

"We may here see, also, for what Christians should pray, when they plead with God for sinners.

"To make the case plain, I will refer again to the illustration in the supposed case of the thief. After the legislature have determined that he may be set at liberty, if he will confess his crime, and pledge himself to obey the law, and he has refused to do this, and still urges his petition for a pardon a long time without success, he obtains a lawyer to prepare a new petition for him, and sends this, in the form of a memorial, all about the community, and obtains all the influential names far and near, and this is handed to the legislature, praying that he may be pardoned. The individual who presents the petition labours hard to operate on the sympathies of those before whom

he brings the case. He speaks of the dreadful horrors of a dungeon, and of the painful deprivation of being cut off for ever from all the blessings of liberty and social life; and brings up the man's family, and shows how dreadful it must be to them, to see the husband and the father torn from their arms, and immured for life in a dismal cell. But the legislature say at once, 'Why all this? Why come to operate on our feelings in such a manner, as though we were a company of hard-hearted wretches, that could not be moved at the miseries of our fellow-men? We are perfectly willing the man should be set at liberty this moment. We are desirous of it—even more so than the petitioners can be. Why, then, come to plead with us? Go to the wretched man for whom you are making all this exertion, and plead with him to confess his crime, and promise obedience, and then he is pardoned, and we shall rejoice in it as much as you.'

"Suppose now they keep urging their petition; in what light could their conduct be regarded, but as an abomination?

"Look now at the sinner, who is alarmed at his exposure to hell. He has been a long time in a great anxiety of mind. He has passed many sleepless nights, shed burning tears over his present wretchedness, and his prospects of future wo, and sent up many loud and bitter cries to Heaven for mercy. All this time God has been pledging him free and full forgiveness and everlasting life, if he would confess and forsake his sins, but this he has refused to do. At length, full of distress, he *goes to the minister and asks his prayers*. He is full of compassion for the unhappy man, sympathizes in his sorrows, falls down on his knees with him, and begs God, with great earnestness, to have mercy upon him, and not let him go to hell.

"The pastor then brings the case of the 'poor mourn-

ing sinner' before the Church; they all weep with him, and send loud cries to Heaven for mercy. They tell God how precious is this man's soul—how dreadful that he should be shut up in hell for ever. And if he has a pious wife and children, they beg God to spare them the misery of seeing the husband and father separated from them for eternity, and shut up in the dark prison-house of hell.

"Now it seems to me that if God should speak to that minister and that church, under such circumstances, he would say, 'Why cry to me for mercy, as though I had no bowels of compassion? As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of that sinner, but that he turn from his evil ways and live. Why talk to me about the worth of his soul, as though I did not know its worth; or about the pains of hell, as though I did not know that they were hard to be endured. I am willing to save that sinner; I am desirous of it—unspeakably more so than you can be. My desires for his salvation have been such that I have given my only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die for him on the cross. Why cry to me for mercy? I have already said, that if he will confess and forsake his sins, he shall have mercy. Why plead thus with me? Go plead with the guilty man to confess and forsake his sins, and then his salvation will be sure.'—p. 106.

The reader will not be at a loss to determine what denomination of Christians Mr. F. has reference to, in the passage just quoted. To make his allusions definite, he quotes the common and well-known phraseology of Methodists.

He goes on, and, in the course of his argument, applies this reasoning to the case of the pious wife praying for the irreligious husband, and to that of parents praying for their children.

He supposes the husband to be lost, notwithstanding

the prayers of the wife, and inquires, "Why were not the many earnest prayers of that pious wife heard in behalf of her husband? She prayed for that for which she *had no need to pray*. She prayed that God would *have mercy on him*. God had had mercy on him, and sent his Son to die for him. She prayed that he might *be saved*. God was more than willing, yea, unspeakably desirous that he should be saved: and if he were to speak from heaven now, he would say, 'As I live, I have no pleasure in his death.'

"Instead of taking God's part against her husband, and labouring to persuade him to be reconciled to God, she was actually taking her husband's part, and endeavouring to persuade God to be reconciled to him. Who cannot see that such must necessarily be a hopeless undertaking?"

He thinks that he has detected, in this practice, "a reason why a great multitude of prayers offered for the salvation of sinners are never heard."

Were it not that there are a few passages of Scripture scattered along the pages of Mr. Fitch's book, we might be led to wonder whether, in the search for families and individuals destitute of the Bible, Mr. Fitch had not been overlooked, and to recommend his case to the attention of the agents of the American Bible Society. Will he apply his illustration respecting the thief to the case of the publican, who prayed, "God *be merciful* to me a sinner;" or to the case of blind Bartimeus, who prayed, "Jesus, thou Son of David, *have mercy on me*;" or to the case of the psalmist, who prayed, "Have *mercy* upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies *blot out my transgressions*?" Were these prayers an abomination to God? Did they not imply the unwillingness of God to save, as much as similar prayers at the present day? And then, with respect to prayers offered up for others, has he not read that the

Saviour prayed thus for his enemies and murderers, "Father, *forgive* them, for they know not what they do?" It was in this way that "he made intercession for the transgressors," according to the prophecy of Isaiah. Has he not read how Stephen prayed for his persecutors: "He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, *lay not this sin to their charge?*" Does he suppose that if God had spoken to the Saviour and to Stephen, he would have said, "Why cry to me for mercy? I have already said, that if they will confess and forsake their sins, they shall have mercy. Why plead thus with me? Go plead with the guilty men to confess and forsake their sins, and then their salvation will be sure?"

Mr. Finney attempts to dispose of the Saviour's example by trifling with the words, "for they know not what they do." He says, "And in that case it was true—they did not know what they were doing, for they did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. But it cannot be said of sinners under the gospel that they do not know what they are doing. They *do know* what they are doing. They do not see the extent of it; but they do know that they are sinning against God and rejecting Christ, and the difficulty is, they are unwilling to submit to God."—*Lectures*, p. 329.

But this criticism defeats itself. It is intended to make out such a difference between the murderers of the Saviour, and sinners generally, as shall justify prayer in the one case, and condemn it in the other; and yet it makes their cases *essentially* alike. Sinners generally know what they are doing, but "they do not see the full extent of it." And was not this precisely the case with those for whom the Saviour prayed? Did they not know that they were sinning against God? Did they not know that they had unjustly and malignantly procured the condemnation of Jesus Christ? Certainly they did. But then there were

some things they did not know. There were consequences which they did not foresee, and our Saviour kindly includes this consideration in his prayer. At any rate, the prayer must have had reference to those principles and acts for which they were guilty and liable to be punished.

But if it is unnecessary to pray that God would have mercy on sinners, and forgive them, because he is already willing, *it is, for the same reason, unnecessary to pray for them at all.* It is true, Mr. Fitch halts before he comes to this legitimate conclusion ; but we cannot imagine how any man of ordinary acumen could avoid perceiving it. He insists strenuously on praying for the sinner ; but what blessings are we to ask for him ? We are thus informed, “And when they bow their knees to pray for him, let them not cry for mercy as though it was a doubtful case whether God was willing to exercise mercy, but let them pray to God to send the Holy Ghost into his heart, to ‘reprove him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,’” &c. He also insists on “the importance of faith in prayer.” So it seems that God is willing to have mercy on sinners, and therefore we need not pray for that ; but he is not willing to send the Holy Ghost into their hearts, and bring them to repentance. It is, at least, “a doubtful case ;” and we must endeavour to change his mind in this respect, and make him willing by prayer, and even then he will not be willing, unless we pray in faith.

Indeed, we have often been led to suspect, that when prayer has been offered for sinners by New School preachers, it has not been offered on the supposition that any thing would be obtained in answer to prayer, but merely as a part of the machinery of moral suasion. The poor sinner has been mercilessly belaboured by the petitioner. God has been told what a vile, infamous, hard-hearted rebel was before him. Doubts have been expressed whe-

ther the Holy Ghost would ever visit the sinner again, if he should not submit now. Their prayers have appeared to be intended, not to obtain a blessing from God, but to operate on the sensibilities of the sinner, and frighten him into the submission demanded.

The tendency of Mr. Fitch's reasoning is obviously to do away prayer altogether. For the sinner, or the Christian, to pray for mercy on himself or others is unnecessary, because God is already willing to have mercy. On the same principle it is unnecessary for them to pray for *any thing* that God is willing to confer. But as it may safely be presumed that God is willing to confer on his people whatever is for their good, and unwilling to confer nothing but what is injurious, the necessity of prayer is wholly superseded.

Thus we see to what fearful issues we are conducted. It would not be surprising to hear such objections to prayer from a Universalist or a Deist; but to hear them from a modern revivalist, a minister of that class to which the term evangelical is supposed to have a special applicability, is truly alarming. But New Divinity is on the high road to Deism.

Is it not high time that a general and persevering effort were made to open the eyes of the public mind to the character and tendencies of this theory, and especially to make the difference between New Divinity and Methodism clearly apparent?

But why this clamorous opposition to prayer as a means of obtaining mercy? If one single indivisible act of the mind is sufficient to make a man a Christian, and the very first which conforms to the law of God be the act in question; if it makes no difference, as we have been told, what may be the specific form of obedient agency which the act presents; why may not the first act of prayer be that which introduces the important change? We now venture

to predict, that when the advocates of New Divinity are compelled to change their ground respecting sinners praying for mercy and salvation, as will most assuredly be the case, they will become as strenuous in recommending, as they now are in opposing it; and that too, without changing their general theory. They will proceed on the principle, that the first obedient act makes the Christian, and that prayer is that act. It is true, that they will be inconsistent, but not more so than in enjoining any other act. They will then appear to be approaching still more closely to Methodism, while they are as far from it as ever. The resemblance will be only in outward appearance. They will enjoin prayer on the principle that the act of prayer for mercy changes the heart. This is our prophecy. We may be mistaken.

It is supposed that these objections to the prayer of the sinner for salvation are sustained by those texts of Scripture which affirm that "the prayer of the wicked is an abomination," &c. That there are certain states of mind which would render prayer an abomination to God, cannot be doubted. For instance, when prayer is hypocritical. Also, when it is offered by him who, at the same time, intends to live in sin, and has no desire to become holy. But the case is materially altered when it is the prayer of one who deplores his sins and sinfulness, and desires to be pardoned and sanctified. That this text includes such among the wicked whose prayer is an abomination, is, we think, extremely doubtful. We know it does not, for they are both commanded and encouraged to pray.

CHAPTER XXI.

MEANS OF GRACE.

IT is sufficiently manifest that while the advocates of this system entertain a special dislike to the practice of praying to God for pardon and regeneration, *the system itself operates with similar and equally destructive effect on all the means of grace.* If one single act of the mind changes a man from an impenitent rebel to a Christian, and he has a natural ability to perform that act at any moment, so that the sole obstacle to its instant performance is his unwillingness, then all the acts by which that one is preceded must be rebellious; and to perform them, with the view of securing the favour of God, while that one act, which would accomplish the purpose at once, is wilfully declined, must be the most flagrant mockery of divine authority. While, therefore, this principle sweeps away prayer, by the same process it makes the same disposition of all the other conditional and preparatory exercises.

This tendency of the principles and arguments of New Divinity has been repeatedly developed in several of the preceding chapters, and we now call the attention of the reader to it for the purpose of showing in what light the subject is regarded by the leading promulgators of that theory. To us the inference is irresistible, that the sinner has nothing to do with the means of grace. What then do they teach respecting this matter?

Mr. Duffield is explicit. He devotes a whole chapter to the subject of the means of grace; and expresses his sentiments as follows:—"Surely, such exhortations as the following, cannot fail to have a most deleterious influence. 'Now, my dear young friends, here is your duty, you are called to believe in Christ, and to exercise repentance unto life. But you are not called, but forbidden

to attempt this duty in your own strength.' It is well that the feelings of many counteract the influence of their theory; and that the exhortations, suggested alike by the sacred Scriptures and by common sense, notwithstanding a mystic theology, are addressed to the consciences of sinners, to urge them to instant repentance. The exhortations 'to *seek*,' and '*pray*,' and '*strive*,' and '*use the means*,' which are sometimes substituted for those which it is explicitly given in charge to the minister of Christ to urge, *cannot fail to perplex, bewilder, distract.*"—p. 544.

Again: "Take the confession of a young man, which has recently been spread before the churches, and whose clear discriminating mind required better counsellors than it seems to have been his lot to meet: 'I was almost ready to despair; but I remembered that God's arm was not shortened, that it could not save, and I determined never to cease from striving: but even this, I knew was what I would not be able to do of myself. This continued to be my state, with but little variation, for more than a week. After listening, with great interest, to preaching, and talking with Christians,' he adds, 'nothing they said, however, gave me much encouragement. It was only "*strive*," "*seek*," "*ask*," "*knock*." That I was ready to do; and for the few days past this darkness has been breaking away, and in its place a calm assurance has been succeeding.'"—*Ibid.*

Here is, we think, a case of genuine conversion; and yet Mr. D. cites it for the purpose of throwing suspicion upon it, and of condemning the instructions which the individual received and the course he pursued. He says, "The writer of these confessions may have become such [a Christian]; but other evidence of the fact, than that which he intimates influences his judgment in the case, is indispensably necessary." After some farther comment in the same strain, he adds, "The above is merely selected

as a specimen of the practical bearing of the counsels given by those, who, instead of directing at once to the Saviour, and spreading the truth which is to be believed before the mind, and exposing the guilt and danger of every moment's delay to repent, and requiring it, as by the authority of God, to be instantly done—exhort to pray, and read the Bible, and use the means of grace—seeking, knocking, striving after faith and repentance, and what not.”—p. 545.

We do not care to answer either the sophistry or the sneers contained in the above remarks. It would be perfectly easy to show that the directions which seem to excite his contempt are just such as were given by Jesus Christ himself; but our object is to present the sentiments of Mr. D. respecting the means of grace, and we think that there is no danger of misunderstanding them.

Again he says, “If you direct him to *use the means*, as conducing to his salvation, or to make any other effort than the one all essential, you do actually soothe him, for the present, and for the present keep him from Christ.”—p. 547.

Again: “To tell him to do *any act* as conducive to his salvation prior to his *full* and actual compliance with the claims of God for his heart, is to tell him to do what God abhors, and cannot accept, and in which he may rest to his everlasting perdition.”—p. 550.

Again: “But, as he would not throw the soul, on the very threshold of the kingdom, immeasurably, and perhaps eternally, back, let him beware how he directs him to pray, or to *use the means*, lest he comfort him in his rebellion.”—p. 548.

On this subject, a writer in the Christian Spectator remarks, “There can be no *real* using of the means of grace except at the indivisible moment of time when, renouncing his selfish feelings, the sinner contemplates di-

vine truth as the power of God unto salvation, and instantly obeys its dictates. Any thing short of this is not a use, but an *abuse* of the means of grace.”—Vol. v, No. 1, page 35. The amount of this is obviously that the only means of grace for the sinner to use is the one single act of obedience performed “at the indivisible moment of time” when he changes his own heart.

Take one passage from Mr. Finney, to whom belongs the credit of a fearless presentation of his system, let it lead to what consequences it may. In his lecture on “false comforts for sinners,” he places among false comforts “telling a sinner he must *use the means*.” He enlarges on this point as follows: “Tell an anxious sinner this—You must use the means, and he is relieved. “O, yes, I will do that, if that is all. I thought that God required me to repent and submit to him now. But if using the means will answer, I will do it with all my heart.” He was distressed before because he was cornered up, and did not know which way to turn. Conscience had beset him like a wall of fire, and urged him to repent *now*. But this relieves him at once, and he feels better, and is very thankful, he says, that he found such a good adviser in his distress. But he may use the means, as he calls it, till the day of judgment, and not be a particle the better for it, but will only hasten his way to death. What is the sinner’s use of means but rebellion against God? God uses means. The Church uses means to convert and save sinners, to bear down upon them, and bring them to submission. But what has the sinner to do with using means? Will you set him to using means back upon God, and so make an offset in the matter? Or is he to use means to make himself submit to God? How shall he go to work with his means to make himself submit? It is just telling the sinner, ‘You need not submit to God now, but just use the means awhile, and see if you cannot melt God’s

heart down to you, so that he will yield this point of unconditional submission.' It is a mere cavil to evade the duty of immediate submission to God. It is true, that sinners, actuated by a regard for their own happiness, often give attention to the subject of religion, attend meetings, and pray, and read, and many such things. But in all this, they have no regard to the honour of God, nor do they so much as *mean* to obey him. Their design is not obedience, for if it were they would not be impenitent sinners. They are not, therefore, using the means of grace to be *Christians*, but to obtain pardon and a hope. It is absurd to say that an impenitent sinner is using means to repent, for this is the same as to say that he is willing to repent, or, in other words, that he does repent, and is not an impenitent sinner. So, to say that an unconverted man uses means with a design to become a Christian, is a contradiction, for it is saying, that he is willing to be a Christian, which is the same as to say, that he is a Christian already."—p. 317.

In the foregoing quotations we have not only a distinct avowal of the doctrine which we have charged on the advocates of New Divinity, but likewise a clear illustration of its connection with other parts of their system. The impenitent rebel has a natural ability, by one single "indivisible act of the mind," which may be performed in one "indivisible moment of time," to change his heart and make himself a Christian. Of course, to say that he is using means to become a Christian while he is not a Christian is absurd; for he could become a Christian at any moment if he were willing. Mr. F. reasons unanswerably from his own principles when he undertakes to show that the means of grace are unnecessary and injurious. It is a plain inference. Let them do at once the one thing that will make them Christians. While they refuse to do this, the use of the means of grace can only postpone the change, and protract their rebellion.

The advocates of error are frequently compelled to take refuge in the most glaring contradictions, or run their theories out into the most revolting absurdities. In this dilemma New Divinity places its advocates, and they are sometimes found hanging on one horn, sometimes on the other. The principle on which they base their objections to prayer for mercy, and the "use of the means" in general, would, if faithfully adhered to, require them to discourage the reading of the Bible, religious tracts and periodicals, or other religious publications; as also, to discourage religious conversation, attending places of worship, or the performance of any other act, on the part of the unrenowned, with the view of becoming Christians. Apply to any one of these acts the reasoning which is applied to prayer, and using the means of grace in order to become religious, and the result is, that it is impenitent and rebellious. This Mr. Duffield affirms in the following, which has already been quoted:—

"If you direct him to use the means, as conducing to his salvation, *or to make any other effort than the one* all-essential, you do actually soothe him for the present, and for the present keep him from Christ." "To tell him to perform *any act*, as conducive to his full and actual compliance with the claims of God for his heart, *is to tell him to do what God abhors, and cannot accept, and in which he may rest to his everlasting perdition.*"

If, then, New Divinity be true, nobody should read the Bible, pray, attend the house of God and hear his word, but Christians. To encourage others to do any of these things as conducive to their becoming Christians, is to "*keep them from Christ,*" "comfort them in their rebellion," and tell them "to do what God abhors."

Ministers of this faith, to be consistent, should warn all unconverted persons against doing any of these, from such a motive. But to attempt to carry this theory out in prac-

tice would arouse both piety and common sense to indignant and desperate revolt. They are therefore compelled to contradict their doctrines by their every-day practice. The most galling fire of their logic is poured into their own ranks.

Nor are they less inconsistent in their doctrinal statements than in their practice. Mr. Duffield talks about "preliminary processes." "The attention of the mind requisite to perceive truth, the fixing and dwelling on it necessary to feel it, the apprehension of the evidence that indeed it is truth, and the actual consenting unto it as proposed,—these are all involved in those *preliminary mental processes*, which the injunction to believe and repent implies, and which have a natural tendency to issue exactly in the exercises of faith and repentance. If then such things be called using the means of grace, we shall not object. But certainly this is not the ordinary, and theological use of the phrase."—p. 551. So it seems that after all, Mr. D. has no objection to the sinner's "using the means of grace," if he will only use those for which Mr. D. has a preference. It is using the means of grace in "the ordinary and theological use of the phrase" to which he objects so strenuously. Let the awakened sinner only avoid the wicked and unscriptural practice enjoined by the Methodists, of *praying, reading the Bible, "seeking, knocking, striving after faith and repentance, and what not,"* and Mr. D. is satisfied. But cannot he perceive—cannot any one, who is capable of reasoning, perceive that his objections to one class of means are equally fatal to the other? What are those "preliminary mental processes," but "acts" and "efforts" preceding the "one" "indivisible" and "all-essential" act, and "conducting" to it? Are we not compelled, by consistency, to class them with those "any other efforts" which Mr. D. so pointedly condemns, as calculated to soothe the sinner for the present,

and for the present keep him from Christ? Mr. D.'s system places him in this dilemma—either the man is, in some degree, penitent and believing when he enters upon these preliminary processes, or he is wholly impenitent and unbelieving. If the latter, he does “what God abhors and cannot accept.” If the former, he is already a Christian, and the preliminary processes are all reduced to *subsequent* processes. Perhaps it may be replied, that “to require the sinner to repent and believe, without these preliminary processes, would be absurd.” No doubt of that; but not more so than is the whole system of New Divinity.

We might furnish a long list of similar incongruities, collected from writers of this school, but the examples given are fair specimens of the rest.

There can be no difficulty now in understanding what is meant by the New School writers and preachers when they speak of immediate repentance, immediate submission, &c., and complain that these are not sufficiently insisted upon. They do not mean, by immediate submission, immediately entering upon those preparatory and conditional performances, which, if persevered in, will eventuate in regeneration. They mean the immediate performance of some single indivisible act of the mind, without taking any previous steps as conducing to it, which they suppose to change a man, in one moment, from a state of the most decided enmity to God, to the condition of a Christian. No matter how plausible the general terms are, in which they choose to describe this act—whether they call it a change of heart, a new birth, or a new creation, they mean nothing more than one single act, which the worst man has a natural ability to perform at any moment, without prayer, or reading the word of God, or using any of the means of grace. With respect to the nature of this act, it is no matter what its specific form may be. It is the very first act

of obedience to the requirements of God, whether that act be a sincere desire or determination to be a Christian, or a single movement of repentance, or of faith, or of gratitude to God. And it is because we do not preach this doctrine, that we are represented as encouraging the sinner in rebellion, and keeping him away from Christ, and as failing to urge the sinner to instant submission!!

There is one feature in Mr. Duffield's discussion of the subject which is somewhat amusing. After having described, in his own way, the course of those who, instead of directing the sinner to immediate submission, "exhort to pray, and read the Bible, and use the means of grace—seeking, knocking, striving after faith and repentance, and what not," he says, "Now against all such theory and practice we enter our solemn protest. It is contrary to the principles of common sense. That teaches us to direct the attention specifically and directly toward the *result* to be secured. The means, or process, by which that result is to be obtained, are, in many cases, *instinctively* discovered, and while requiring and urging the *final issue*, every one feels that the *preliminary processes* which, in the nature of things, are necessary to secure it, are also required. But to direct the attention *first* to *these*, is, in fact, to cause the mind *virtually to lose sight of the great end* to be secured."—p. 545.

It is not for the purpose of noticing the contradiction involved in the admission that "preliminary processes" are "in the nature of things necessary" to conversion, that we call attention to this singular passage. What we have in view is the declaration, that the "means" are "instinctively discovered," and that "to direct the attention" of the inquirer "first to these, is, to cause" him "to lose sight of the great end to be secured." We think it very probable that if the true means are not instinctively, or otherwise discovered, independently of Mr. D.'s instruc-

tions, they will go undiscovered. But let us try this doctrine of instinctive discovery and directing first to the end, &c.

The man who, under the Jewish law, accidentally killed another, was liable to be immediately killed by the relative of the slain. But there were certain cities, called cities of refuge, to which he might flee and be secure from the avenger of blood. A man has killed his fellow. His friend urges him to flee instantly to the nearest city of refuge. He does not know the way. His friend is engaged in giving him directions, when up comes a sage rabbi, who interferes thus: "I enter my solemn protest against the manner in which you are instructing that individual. Direct his attention directly and specifically to the city itself. This talk about the road he is to pursue cannot fail to perplex, bewilder, and distract him. It diverts his attention from the city itself. Fly instantly to the city. You will discover the road instinctively." Who does not perceive that in this case the rabbi would have but little ground on which to establish his claims to superior wisdom? Now we take this rabbi as the representative of Mr. D.; and while we would most sincerely "enter our protest against his instructions," we will decline at present entering our *solemn* protest.

CHAPTER XXII.

MEANS OF GRACE CONTINUED.

ALTHOUGH the teachers of this system fail to conform their practice to their theory in some instances, we must not suppose that this is the case in every instance. Mr. Duffield informs us, that these doctrines influence their "whole system of spiritual tactics." This fact is specially exemplified on the subject of prayer, as a means of obtaining salvation.

Here is one of the leading points of difference between the New School Calvinists and the Methodists, in the treatment of awakened sinners. Let any close and intelligent observer attend alternately the meetings of these denominations, while both are in the midst of a revival, and he will find, that while the Methodists invariably urge on the inquirer, not only to decide instantly and fully in favour of the service of God, to repent and believe the gospel, but likewise to *pray* for the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, and especially for the forgiveness of sins, the other party decline altogether these exhortations to *prayer*. They exhort to immediate decision, or repentance, or faith—acts which they consider identical with, or at least equivalent to, each other. They employ powerful arguments to enforce their exhortations. They call on the church to pray for the sinner, but they do not require him to pray for himself. We speak what we know, and testify what we have seen. Great pains have been taken, on our part, to obtain information on these subjects, and we are fully assured not only of our intention to speak the truth, but of the correctness of what we affirm. We have attended revival meetings, both in Philadelphia and

in New-York, in some of the leading and most successful churches under the influence of New Divinity, for the purpose of observing their manner of proceeding. We have seen, at the close of the sermon, nearly, if not quite, two hundred persons, go, as inquirers, to the pews assigned them near the pulpit. We have heard them addressed on the subject of their duty, urged to the performance of it—and in all that was said to them there was not a single exhortation to pray for pardon and regeneration. One or two prayers were offered in their behalf, and they were dismissed. We have been solicited to preach at protracted meetings conducted on the principles of New Divinity; and, feeling no reluctance to do what we could consistently, have accepted these invitations. We have attended one or two inquiry meetings, and seen this theory carried out, by addressing inquirers as Christians, merely because they had fully made up their minds to become the servants of God, without one exhortation to pray, or to seek for justification by faith and a change of heart; and we have been led to grapple with painful doubts, whether we were doing right in silently bidding God speed to a system which trifles so egregiously with the awful interests of eternity.

Some may be ready to ask with astonishment, Do they not direct inquirers to bow the knee in prayer? Have we not seen them kneel down by hundreds, in compliance with this direction? We doubt not that such scenes have been witnessed. But if any have inferred from this fact merely, that the duty of prayer for mercy and salvation was enjoined on those inquirers, they have doubtless been misled. According to the account, published in the New-York Evangelist for January 13, 1838, of a revival in the Seventh Presbyterian Church, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. Hatfield, this very course was pursued; but the reason of their bowing the knee is explained by Mr. H.

himself. "The anxious were invited after sermon to the lecture-room; and, it was thought, more than three hundred assembled there deeply affected. An unusually large proportion of these were men. Nearly all of these bowed the knee during prayer, *in token of their willingness to give up all for Christ, and determination to grieve the Holy Spirit no more.*" Again: "Although there was a very heavy rain on Thursday evening, the congregation was very large, and one hundred inquirers met after sermon in the lecture-room. *When called to bow the knee in token of subscribing themselves to be the Lord's*, all but three or four instantly complied, and gladly, with the invitation." The object of this movement is plainly stated. It was not that they might pray for forgiveness and spiritual influence, that they were "called to bow the knee," but merely that they might furnish an outward indication of "their determination to grieve the Holy Spirit no more," &c. While this revival was going on, there was also in the same neighbourhood a Methodist revival of great power, in which "inquirers" were "called upon to bow the knee;" but not merely as a token of their sincere determination, henceforth, to become the servants of God, but that they might carry out that determination, by godly sorrow for sin, by penitential confession, by calling upon God in persevering prayer, until he should forgive their sins, regenerate them, and grant them the evidence of their acceptance with God, and peace and joy through believing.

The preachers of New Divinity may pursue a great variety of measures without departing from the leading principles of their system. As, according to their gospel, sinners are converted by moral suasion, they will, of course, adopt those measures which, all things considered, appear most likely to persuade them to that determination which is supposed to constitute conversion. They may differ in opinion as to what particular measures

are best adapted to the human constitution. Or, to suppose them perfectly agreed on this point, they may, from certain considerations, consent to vary their measures, preferring some at one time, because they have the advantage of novelty, or because there is a great partiality for them—and declining the same at another time, because there are powerful prejudices against them.

In some instances, and in places where the influence of Methodism has been considerable, they have invited awakened sinners to the altar, and called forward the Methodist brethren to assist in giving instructions, just as if there were a perfect agreement of opinion as to the instructions to be given. This, we have been informed, was done by Mr. Finney when he first set out. It is true, the Methodists did not work altogether to his satisfaction, as may be seen by reading his lecture on "FALSE COMFORTS FOR SINNERS," where Methodist prayers and instructions are held up to ridicule; but then this was, on the whole, his best policy. It served to hide from observation the great difference between New Divinity and Methodism, at a time when the perception of it might have operated very unfavourably, and also to enlist the sympathies and suffrages of Methodism against Old School opposition. Generally, inquirers have been invited to the anxious seats near the pulpit, to be instructed and prayed for. In many instances, they are required to withdraw from the congregation to the lecture-room. What takes place there, except in one or two instances, we are not prepared to affirm. These meetings are conducted with considerable privacy, but, from what we have occasionally heard, we have reason to believe, that there the principles of New Divinity have their freest and fullest development and application. The Rev. Mr. Welton says of the "inquiry meetings" held by Mr. Burchard in Poughkeepsie, "Here, under God, lies much of the strength of Br. B.,

and persons who have not been present at those meetings can form but an imperfect idea of the plan of operation, and the amount of doctrinal knowledge communicated to the hopeful convert. Here they have demonstration so clear and lucid that many soon appear like old and experienced Christians." The meetings at which such a vast amount of doctrinal knowledge was communicated, were held "after the public services had closed."—*N. Y. Evangelist*, No. 387.

With respect to the means of ascertaining who have submitted, we observe an equal variety. Sometimes they are required to leave one set of seats, and take another, as a token of submission; sometimes to rise up in the congregation, and sometimes to "bow the knee." In one of the numbers of the *New-York Evangelist* for July, 1837, there is an account of a revival, under the direction of Rev. Mr. Foote, in which it is particularly stated, that *all new measures were avoided*. The gospel was preached, and the congregations dismissed as at ordinary times, and those who had "made the wise choice" were invited to meet with the people of God to be addressed as Christians. This is all perfectly consistent with the New School theology.

We would not be understood to affirm that they never direct the sinner to pray. In the little book by Dr. Skinner and President Beecher, to which we have several times referred, there is the following direction: "After you shall have prayed with him, it may *sometimes* be useful to call on him to *pray for himself*." We are not to suppose, however, that this is a concession in favour of Methodist principles and practice. It is not intended that the sinner shall be directed to pray for mercy, in expectation of receiving it in answer to prayer. To suppose that it is so intended, would be to array the authors, not only against their brethren of the same school, but also against

themselves ; for they explicitly direct that the sinner shall be told, that to become religious is an intelligent, voluntary, *indivisible* act of the mind, in which he ceases to rebel against God, submits to his authority, and accepts of his mercy ; and that to perform this act requires no length of time, and no protracted effort ; that it may be done at this time, and in this place ; and that if he departs from this place without performing this act, he goes in a spirit of stouter rebellion, and may bring upon himself swift and sudden destruction.—p. 42.

We would here ask, on what principle the sinner shall be directed to pray for mercy, when he can become religious without prayer, by one voluntary, indivisible act of the mind, which requires no length of time, but may be done at this time, and in this place ? Either the first act of prayer must be the act in which he ceases to rebel against God, submits to his authority, accepts his mercy, and becomes religious, or he is directed to perform a rebellious act as conducive to his submission. Suppose he departs from the place of conversation to his chamber to pray ; if he has not already performed the act which makes him a Christian, “ he goes on in a spirit of stouter rebellion.” In short, here is an exhortation to the practice, which elsewhere they so unsparingly condemn, on directing persons to pray whom they profess to consider “ impenitent sinners.”

But this direction to pray, it would seem, is not to be given indiscriminately. It is only “ sometimes ” that this practice “ *may* be useful.” If this be the case, will there not be difficulty in determining when it is proper to resort to it ? We would suggest one rule, for the guidance of those concerned. When the doctrine, that a man may change his own heart, without prayer, at any moment, is likely to shock the feelings and understanding of the individual to whom it is addressed, and excite suspicions of

dangerous error, as may easily be the case, if he has been Methodistically educated, then it may "be useful to call on him to pray for himself."

Having contemplated the ravages of New Divinity on those means of grace by which, according to God's appointment, the sinner secures the forgiveness of his sins, and the renewal of his nature, we proceed to trace still further its desolating career. *We now find ourselves guided to the conclusion that the hardened sinner may become a Christian, without any of those deep and painful convictions for sin which constitute godly sorrow, such as Peter felt when he went out and wept bitterly; and that these exercises, so far from entering essentially into the nature of repentance and submission, as the Methodists suppose, are indicative of, and caused by, rebellion against God.* The process of reasoning by which we arrive at this point has been reiterated again and again. Regeneration is one indivisible act of the mind, which the sinner has a natural ability to perform at any moment. Of course, for him to be crying and wailing over his depravity, and exposure to punishment, is absurd and inexcusable. It is quite as bad as praying for forgiveness while he refuses to perform his immediate duty. Let him do what he is all along perversely refusing to do, and the cause of his distress will be instantly removed. This he might have done at the commencement of his disquietude, or even before it commenced, and thus prevented it altogether.

In accordance with this obvious tendency of the system, Mr. Finney says, in his lecture on "False Comforts for Sinners," "*What is all his distress but rebellion itself.*" He is not comforted, because he refuses to be comforted. God is ready to comfort him. You need not think to be more compassionate than God. He will fill him with comfort in an instant if he will submit. *But there he stands struggling against God, and against the Holy Ghost, and*

against conscience, until he is distressed almost to death, and still he will not yield."—p. 314.

It is plain that Mr. F. does not consider any part of the inquirer's distress as the consequence of voluntarily yielding to the Spirit of God, or as constituting repentance or godly sorrow for sin. It is solely the consequence of rebellion. "If he would submit," or, in other words of this same author, if he would "yield one point to divine authority," God would comfort him in an instant. On the same page he adds, "It is his clear view of the nature and duty of repentance that produces his distress. It is the light that brings agony to his mind *while he refuses to obey.*" So far, it seems, from this distress constituting repentance, or belonging to it, it is owing solely to the sinner's refusing to repent. He sees the nature and duty of repentance—he refuses to obey, and hence his distress.

In another lecture, he says, "Another error is in supposing that they must *suffer a considerable time under conviction*, as a kind of punishment, before they are ready properly to come to Christ. And so they will pray for conviction. And they think that if they are ground down to the earth with distress, for a sufficient time, then God will pity them, and be more ready to help them, when he sees them so very miserable. They should be made to understand clearly that they are thus unhappy and miserable, *merely because* they refuse to accept the relief which God offers. Take the case of the stubborn child, when his parent stands over him with the rod, and the child shudders and screams. Should that child imagine he is gaining any thing by his agony? His distress arises from his conviction, and shall he pray for more conviction? Does that make him any better? Does his father pity him any more because he stands out? Who does not see that he is all the while growing worse?"—p. 345.

This passage fully declares Mr. Finney's views. The

sinner, whose spirit is deeply troubled on account of his character and condition, is like the stubborn child under the rod, who “shudders and screams,” and is in “agony,” but yet “stands out”—the whole cause of whose agony is his rebellion, which makes the use of the rod necessary. He is miserable, merely because he refuses to accept the relief. His conviction makes him no better, but, on the contrary, he grows worse and worse.

It is not our intention to endorse the doctrine, that it is necessary to “suffer a considerable time under conviction, as a kind of punishment.” We are strongly inclined to look upon this representation as an intentional caricature of the true doctrine. Mr. Finney’s doctrine is, that no distress of mind is strictly necessary to repentance, whether as a punishment or a blessing.

We find these sentiments clearly affirmed in a Sermon on Sanctification, by the Rev. Daniel A. Clark, published in the National Preacher.

He remarks—“Another question may here very properly be asked, When does holiness begin? And the answer is obvious. It begins at the moment of regeneration. Till then all the exercises are unholy; for the carnal mind is enmity against God. Nor is there any degree of alarm, or any amount of conviction, that can generate a holy affection in the heart previously to that period. Of course, all the prayers offered, and all the exertions made, previously to this change, are all unregenerate prayers and exertions. Nor can it be believed consistently with correct Scripture views, that, anterior to this moment, there is any approximation toward correct feeling. *No alarm, nor the most distinct conviction, can bring an unregenerate man to feel more correctly toward God, or an unholy object, than he did in a state of carelessness and security.*”

Again: “And then it may be a question, whether the sinner, under alarm, *does not wax worse and worse, till the*

moment of passing from death unto life? If he has more light—if he sees more distinctly the objects of his implacable hatred, does he not obviously rise in hatred, till it is changed into love?”—No. 118.

This doctrine is also contained in the following passage from Dr. Skinner and President Beecher's "Hints," &c. "Studiously avoid, in all your directions and prayers, direct or implied misrepresentations of the real condition of impenitent sinners. Never forget that they are free agents, and do always and obstinately resist the Holy Ghost, *and that their anguish, perplexity, confusion of mind,* and other difficulties proceed from this cause."—p. 13.

Indeed, the first time we ever heard this doctrine it was avowed by Dr. S. in the Fifth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, of which he was then the pastor. There were a number of "anxious persons" present. He affirmed broadly, and without qualification, that every instance of deep distress on the part of awakened sinners was to be attributed to resistance to the Holy Ghost. We were startled by the declaration, but did not understand its source and bearing as well as we now do.

In opposition to this strange notion, we affirm that deep mental distress on account of depravity and condemnation is one of the fruits of the Spirit—that it is required of every sinner—that it is a constituent of repentance—and that one reason why many fall short of saving experience is, that their convictions are not sufficiently deep and painful. They are not deep enough to imbitter sin. And the reason why they do not arrive at the requisite intensity is resistance to the Spirit's influences on the part of the awakened sinner. He refuses to obey the impulses of the Spirit. If he would surrender himself fully to the guidance of the Spirit, he would be led on to still more painful discoveries of his character and condition, and thus prepared for the full and cordial acceptance of the

atonement, and an entire dedication of himself to the service of God.

We do not maintain that deep convictions are necessary to the first act of submission to God. This is often the result, or development, of a merely intellectual conviction, so far as the state of mind is concerned. We suppose that a man in his right mind, and not deserted by the Holy Spirit, may, at any time, take the first step toward his conversion. If it were true that the first movement of the mind which conforms to the will of God constitutes regeneration, we should be obliged to admit that convictions are not always necessary to regeneration. But this is not the case. It is but the commencement of a process necessary to the attainment of that blessing; and in that process these painful exercises, for which the New School theory finds no place, are invariably developed.

Nor do we maintain that these exercises must be alike in all cases. Various causes may operate to modify them. In some they are intense and violent, almost driving the individual to distraction. In others they are much less severe, but yet sufficient for the end for which they are designed. They are the godly sorrow for sin, working repentance unto salvation, which needs not to be repented of. And the disagreement between the Scriptures and New Divinity, may be inferred from the discordant considerations with which they respectively regard these mental inquietudes.

Neither is it denied that distress of mind may be greatly augmented, prolonged, and modified, by a reluctance to acquiesce in some of the requisitions of duty, or the want of a vigorous effort: nor that in some instances the Spirit produces deep and harassing convictions in despite of the sinner's resolute resistance. But these facts neither suggest nor sustain the inference, that all cases of deep distress on account of sin are to be attributed to

resistance to the Holy Spirit. The Almighty Spirit displays his sovereignty by greatly diversified operations, all tending to the same ends; but the production of godly sorrow for sin, as subservient to repentance and faith, is but the execution of an invariable law in the economy of grace.

It is not to be expected that this doctrine will be carried out faithfully in all the preaching and writings of New Divinity. It is most likely to be brought to bear on cases of very deep and protracted distress. For whatever may be the ability of the sinner, or the causes and moral quality of this painful anxiety, they find it, in general, quite conducive to submission to their instructions. Hence they labour to produce it. But they desire to produce just enough to lead the sinner to resolve on becoming a Christian, and joining the Church. It is the unwillingness of the sinner to take these steps, and that alone, which makes any degree of uneasiness necessary. In some instances, it would seem, the sinner approves of his duty, makes no resistance to the Spirit, but at once exerts his natural ability, resolves on becoming a Christian, and becomes one without any distress of mind whatever—and then we have one of the examples, so highly lauded, of a *calm, intelligent submission*. But when the anxiety of mind becomes so deep as to induce strong cries for mercy, and an unwillingness to be comforted, without an evidence of acceptance with God, it is deemed a serious disadvantage. The case then becomes unmanageable, on their theory. They construe it into a case of obstinate rebellion. The sinner is able, at any moment, to submit, but is unwilling. He must be urged to *immediate submission*. He must be told that all his distress is but the evidence of stout rebellion. He is not willing to place himself in the hands of God to be disposed of as he pleases. He is selfish—he is waxing worse and worse. And if the individual,

following the instructions of Methodism, should persevere in his cries for mercy, until he obtains the evidence of his acceptance with God, as is the case with thousands, they would either call in question the genuineness of his experience, or explain it by saying, that he might have obtained the favour of God at any previous period, just as easily as when he did—that his distress and prayers, so far from conducing to his conversion, only postponed it—that he was all this time fighting against God, and that had he done at first what he did at last, he might have obtained religion without a single pang.

Much of the writing and preaching of modern Calvinism is decidedly calculated to make the impression, that the moral condition of the awakened sinner in deep distress and crying for mercy, is worse than that of the careless sinner. Says Mr. Walton, in his "Narrative of a Revival in the Third Presbyterian Church of Baltimore," "In giving directions to awakened sinners, we are sometimes led into error by a species of false charity, thinking that as they are now under so much religious concern, their hearts are not so wicked as the Bible represents the hearts of all unconverted persons to be." Again: "The *light of conviction*, then, which brings them [the holiness, justice, and sovereignty of God] into view, *so far from lessening his enmity, increases it*, and it continues to increase to the last moment before the sinner is subdued. It is true, therefore, to say that the *convicted*, as well as the careless sinner, is waxing *worse and worse*, and that his sins are increasing in a *tremendous ratio*."—pp. 24, 25.

From these views it clearly follows, *that the convicted sinner is entitled to no sympathy on account of his great distress of mind, and that any manifestation of sympathy toward him, more than is displayed toward the most careless sinner, must be of dangerous tendency, being calculated to make the impression on his mind that his distress is not wholly the re-*

sult of rebellion, and that his present state of mind is more hopeful and interesting than that by which it was preceded.

We would probably never have thought of drawing this very obvious inference, had we not found it gravely asserted as a doctrine. "A note of commiseration," says Mr. Duffield, "a tacit acknowledgment of any other inability than a wilful refusal to come to Christ, and a directing to means which can be used, as though faith and repentance were not, and might not be instantly exercised, will blunt the edge of the keenest convictions. The sinner and his counsellor may both weep together, and sing a song of lamentation over the imbecility of his nature, and his wretched condition, but his sense of guilt will necessarily be impaired by such a process."—p. 347.

Mr. Finney is tremendously severe on those who manifest sympathy for the sinner in distress of mind. He assumes that the sympathy is false and misplaced, which is indeed the case if New Divinity be true, as the sinner can put a stop to his anxiety at any moment he pleases. The kind of sympathy which he feels for such, is thus expressed: "The sinner may *whine* and *cry*, 'O how I am sorrowing and seeking Jesus!' It is no such thing. Jesus is seeking you."—*Lectures*, p. 328.

I cannot express the horror I feel at this sentiment. It is utterly and eternally alien to the gospel of Christ. That system of tenderness and good will, requires us to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CALVINISM.

AT the outset of this discussion, it was stated that the New School divines have not abandoned the leading peculiarities of Calvinism; but, on the contrary, hold to them as firmly as those of the Old School; and that the differences of opinion between these parties are to be sought in the theory by which the former attempt to reconcile the prominent doctrines of Calvinism, with the offer of salvation to all men, and the obligation of all men to repent and believe the gospel. Having exhibited fully the peculiarities of New Divinity, and proved their want of agreement with the oracles of God, we now propose to substantiate the declaration, that those who advocate them, are, at the same time, decided Calvinists.

The importance of this part of the argument arises out of a wide-spread misapprehension as to the doctrinal position occupied by this class of theologians, in relation to Calvinism and Methodism. There are thousands, who suppose, that they have entirely abandoned the former, and nearly, if not quite, come over to the latter.

But the reader will not be astonished at the prevalence of this delusive supposition, when he takes into consideration the causes to which it may be referred. It is attributable, in part, to the fact, that they have been, and are still, in the habit of keeping Calvinism out of sight in their public ministrations. This practice, however, is not peculiar to the New School party. There are popular preachers who have distinguished themselves by their opposition to their New School brethren, and advocated their separation from the church, of whose preaching, very sensible hearers, in pretty constant attendance, affirm that it is rarely distinguishable, so far as doctrine is concerned, from that

of the Methodists. On this point we can adduce high authority. The late Dr. Porter, president of the Theological Seminary at Andover, and an eminent minister of the Calvinistic faith, in a letter to Dr. Beecher, which may be found in a work, entitled, "Harvey on Moral Agency," complains thus:—

"There is a large number of orthodox ministers in New-England who, from family alliances, from constitutional delicacy of temper, &c., &c., as I hinted above, will temporize and make *smooth work*, from an honest conviction that a *full* disclosure of the truth would *alienate their hearers*. The bitter revilings of base men have been gradually and insensibly leading Calvinistic ministers to *hide their colours* and *recede* from their ground. Dr. Spring's Church at Newburyport, Park-street, especially in Dr. Griffin's day, and a few others, have stood like the Macedonian phalanx. But others have gone backward. *Caution*, CAUTION, has been the watchword of ministers. When they do preach the old standard doctrines, it is in so guarded a phraseology that they are *not understood to be the same*. You know as well as I; but, if I am not mistaken, thirty years ago ten sermons were preached in New-England on total depravity and *election*, to one that is preached on these subjects now."—p. 174.

This language needs no comment. It fully confirms the conviction previously derived from what we have "heard and seen." And we read, with no little surprise, in the Life of the Rev. Robert Hall, the late eminent Baptist minister in England, a passage imputing to that great man the course which Dr. Porter condemns. The biographer says, "His system of theological tenets (*creed* is an ill-favoured term) was strictly orthodox, on the model of what has come to be denominated moderate Calvinism. With the other conspicuous points—the doctrine of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the atonement, and justifica-

tion by faith alone, he held the more distinctively Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, though I cannot answer for the precise terms in which he would have stated it; but I presume he would have accepted those employed in the articles of the Church of England. *In preaching he very rarely made any reference to that doctrine*, and his recognition of it by *implication* was too indistinct for toleration from the rigidly Calvinistic hearers of any preacher not privileged by talents and public favour to bear down all censorial pretensions.”—*Hall's Works*, vol. iii, p. 110.

We could almost have wished, in behalf of the memory of a great man, and of the credit of the Christian ministry, that this statement had been withheld. He held the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to be a part of the gospel revealed by Jesus Christ, and committed to his ministers. It was a leading tenet in his denominational standard of faith; and yet in preaching he very rarely referred to it, and when his language implied it, the implication was so indistinct, that had it not been for his great talents and popularity, his more consistent brethren would have made his course the subject of censure.

We are further informed, on the next page, that,—“He was therefore exempt from all those restrictions, in respect to the mode of presenting and urging the overtures of redemption, which have been imposed on some good men of the Calvinistic faith by a concern for systematic consistency. He took the utmost liberty in his strain of inculcation; exhorting, inviting, entreating, expostulating, remonstrating, in language of nearly the same tenor as that which might be employed by an *Arminian preacher*; with the exception, of course, of that notion of free-will, which recurs with such laborious iteration in the preaching of that order, and which was excluded from his faith equally by theological and philosophical reasons.”

It is not intimated here that he took pains to contradict

“that notion of free-will.” He probably was as silent respecting it, as he was respecting the doctrine of predestination. And, by his earnestness in urging the invitations and entreaties of the gospel, he doubtless made on the mind of his audiences the impression, that he fully believed in the Arminian doctrine of free-will, which those invitations and exhortations so obviously imply.

The biographer goes on to say,—“This nonadvertence in his sermons to the Calvinistic tenet, was not from any secret consciousness that the belief of it is essentially incongruous with his free strain of inculcation; it was not that he might enjoy a license for inconsistency, through the device of keeping one of two incompatible things out of sight; but he judged that neither the doctrine itself, nor the process of reasoning to prove the belief of it, consistent with the most unrestricted language of exhortation, could be made a profitable part of popular instruction. He deemed it authority enough for his practice, independently of all abstracted reasoning on the subject, that he had the example of the divinely-inspired preachers urging the demands of the gospel on the unbelievers and the wicked, in the most unmeasured terms of exhortation, the predestinating decrees of Heaven set out of the question; and that in modern experience it is a notorious fact, those preachers of the Calvinistic school (for one memorable example, Whitefield) who have nevertheless availed themselves of this freedom to the utmost extent, have been incomparably more successful in effecting the great object of preaching, than those who have, somewhat presumptuously, charged themselves with so much responsibility respecting the unknown determination of the Almighty, that they must not call men to faith and repentance lest they should contravene his sovereign purposes.”

Mr. Hall's reason for his “nonadvertence, in his sermons, to the Calvinistic tenet,” is assigned:—“He judged

that neither the doctrine itself, nor the process of reasoning” by which the doctrine is supposed to be reconciled with the language of unrestricted exhortation, “could be made a profitable part of popular instruction.” The authority which he claimed for his practice in this particular is also referred to. He had the example of the “*inspired preachers* urging the demands of the gospel” on the wicked without any reference to the “predestinating decrees of Heaven,” and also that of the most successful Calvinistic ministers—Whitefield, for instance.

We cannot let this opportunity pass of vindicating the Gospel of the Son of God, and its inspired publishers, from the imputation here cast on them. Shall it be said by Christian ministers, that doctrines which Christ has revealed, especially the doctrine which declares his fixed purposes respecting those to whom the minister is sent, are *unprofitable* topics for public instruction? And shall they be *laid aside* on such a pretext? Has the Author of inspiration made this distinction respecting the doctrines which he has committed to the ministry of reconciliation? Or has he revealed, under the impression that it would be profitable for instruction in righteousness, a doctrine which will not stand the test of experiment, and which his ministers are, therefore, under the necessity of keeping out of sight? And if it be left to the judgment of fallible men to determine whether it be profitable or not to preach a particular doctrine, we should like to know what security there is, that many other doctrines will not be involved in the same condemnation? We declare our opinion, that a more dangerous and presumptuous principle, it would be difficult to advance!

And with respect to the alleged example of the apostles, we deny that they preached repentance without reference to “the predestinating decrees of Heaven.” They incessantly appealed to those decrees respecting the righteous

and the wicked, and the manner in which the sinner could be received into the favour of God, as the great motives to repentance and obedience. It is true it would have been silly enough for them to urge the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and decrees, as a motive to repentance, because it contains no such motive. If God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass, it occurs to us that, before any man is authorized to repent of any of his actions, he ought to be assured that God has repented of his having decreed them, or he might be convicted of repenting that he had done the will of God. This doctrine the apostles have so completely "set out of the question," that it is not to be found in any of their writings; nor do we wonder that those Calvinistic ministers have been the most successful, who have said the least about it.

Mr. Hall very justly claims the authority of Whitefield's example in this matter. For, while in his writings, he frequently appeals to his success, as proof of the truth of his Calvinistic tenets, he says, in a letter to Mr. Wesley, "For Christ's sake, if possible, dear sir, never speak against election in your sermons. *No one can say that I ever mentioned it in my public discourses, whatever my private sentiments may be.*" *Memoirs of Whitefield*, p. 57. Mr. Wesley's open and undisguised opposition to Calvinism, brought out Mr. Whitefield in defence of it; and it is easily gathered from all the biographers of the latter, that just in proportion as he advocated Calvinism, he restricted both his popularity and usefulness. Now, we have no hesitancy in asserting, that in Europe and America, there are thousands of Calvinistic ministers, whose practice, in this respect, is guided by the principle to which Mr. Hall conformed his preaching.

Dr. Skinner, in a sermon preached at the opening of the Mercer-street Presbyterian church, in New-York, entitled, "Thy Kingdom Come," strongly recommends the

practice of laying aside doctrinal peculiarities in public instruction. He distinguishes between *sectarian* and *substantial* Christianity, and maintains, that Christians, in their efforts to evangelize the world, "should seek to propagate *substantial* Christianity, rather than any *sectarian* form of it." He explains his meaning by saying, "Among the various sects of true Christians, there are of course peculiarities which distinguish and unhappily divide them from one another; and there is also a common faith, which distinguishes them from all the world, but which indissolubly unites them to one another, and to the great family of God in heaven and on earth. Their common faith is *substantial*, and their party peculiarities are sectarian Christianity. My position is, that in their efforts to spread the gospel among mankind, Christians should seek to propagate, not the latter, but the former—their common faith, not their sectarian peculiarities—what they agree, not what they differ in—what unites, not what divides them. To be, if possible, yet more explicit, I mean to say, and shall attempt to prove, that their object should be to propagate, not both what they agree and what they differ in; but what they agree in, *exclusively of what they differ in*." He then adds, in a note, "It were well, I think, if even ordinary discourses from the pulpit were restricted to these undisputed points. These points are sufficiently numerous and comprehensive to engross all the time and strength of preachers; and it is doubtful if there is a promiscuous congregation on earth that are not liable to be *more injured* than *profited* by polemical sermons."

He here insists on the unprofitableness of preaching sectarian peculiarities, as a reason for keeping them back. True, he says "polemical sermons," and thus changes the issue; but the reader need not be misled, as he is professedly assigning a reason why public teaching should be "restricted" to "undisputed points."

A more absurd and impracticable maxim could hardly be conceived. Were the author of the sermon to act upon it, he would not attempt to explain the nature of human depravity ; for then, he would be introducing a point disputed between the two parties of his own church, and between his own party and the Methodists. He would not, for the same reason, explain the nature of conversion, or regeneration, or the extent of the atonement, or its application. Indeed, the sermon itself is a violation of this maxim, it being devoted to the settlement of questions now agitating the church of which he is a minister. But it answers one purpose admirably : it furnishes a very plausible apology for the concealment of those "sectarian peculiarities" which it may be inconvenient to disclose.

This same principle of ministerial prudence is contended for by Mr. Duffield. He says, "It is of moment that we learn to discriminate between the *facts* of *Scripture* and the doctrines of a system of theology." And again, "The Arminian and the Calvinist *agree* in many essential *facts* of Christianity ; but how widely do they *differ* in their *systems*, and that difference originates in their philosophy. If ministers will preach their *systems*, they must of necessity preach much that is their *own*, and *not* the word of God."—p. 563.

It is fairly inferrible from this language that Mr. D. not only feels authorized to decline preaching his "system of theology," but also *obliged* to decline preaching it, inasmuch as he can preach the "essential facts of Christianity" without preaching his system, and he cannot preach his system without preaching much that is his "own, and not the word of God."

Whatever the "Arminian and the Calvinist" may agree in, there seems to be this difference between them,—the Calvinist can distinguish the peculiarities of his theological system from the great "facts of Christiani-

ty," and style his doctrines "sectarian peculiarities," and exclude them from his ministrations, as a matter of duty, on the ground that it is "unprofitable" to make them a "part of popular instruction;" whereas, the Arminian, professes to believe, that the Scriptures teach doctrines as well as facts, and to derive all the doctrines of his theological system from the word of God. He identifies them with the gospel itself, so far as he understands it; and he no more dare pronounce any of them unprofitable, as topics of pulpit instruction, or to withhold them, than he dare pronounce unprofitable or conceal, the undoubted messages of the Most High.

It would be, at least, a curious inquiry, how Mr. D. would run the line of discrimination, between facts and doctrines. So far as we can see, to preach nothing but what may be called, by way of distinction, the facts of Scripture, would be to confine our pulpit instructions to such statements as these:—There was a man called Jesus Christ. He was crucified by his enemies. After three days he rose from the dead, &c. To attempt a statement of the connection between the death of Christ and the salvation of sinners; or to take up the question whether his death was designed to render salvation attainable by all, or merely a part of mankind, would be to plunge at once into the Socinian, Calvinistic, or Arminian system of theology. But he is not in trouble on this point, as are other men. He can resolve doctrines into facts, and facts into doctrines, just as they meet his approbation or disapprobation.

The adoption and observance of this strange code of ministerial ethics, is, of itself, sufficient to account for the general impression, that Calvinism has been given up by the Calvinistic churches.

But there are other causes. According to Dr. Porter, when they profess to state the doctrines of Calvinism,

“they state them in so guarded a phraseology that they are not understood to be the same.” How often is the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination represented to be this,—that God is a sovereign—that he has *purposes*—that he has a *plan*—just as though Arminians denied these propositions. The natural inference from such statements, formal or implied, is that the doctrine has been caricatured when stated that “God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably *ordain whatsoever comes to pass.*”

The practice of issuing “short creeds” has also contributed to this state of things. These creeds generally contain a number of points of doctrine in which Calvinists and Arminians agree, with one or perhaps two articles in which Calvinism is so cautiously introduced, as to escape the observation of nearly all to whom the creed is presented; and yet there is enough to preserve its orthodoxy, and to lead to the entire system of Calvinism.

Again: They frequently complain that they are misrepresented when their doctrines are imputed to them, and thus the impression is made that they do not hold these doctrines. Dr. Miller, of Princeton, says, “The truth is, it would be difficult to find a writer or speaker who has fairly distinguished himself by opposing Calvinism, who has fairly represented the system, or who really appeared to understand it.”

Dr. Beecher, in his Lectures on Skepticism, says, “I have never seen or heard a correct statement of the Calvinistic system from an opponent.” Now, when it is taken into the account, that Arminians usually represent their doctrines in the very language of their own standards, what is the natural inference, but that they do not believe the doctrines of Calvinism?

He gives an example of the misrepresentation of which he complains. “Consult,” says he, “almost any oracle

of opposition as to what is Calvinism, and the response will be, Calvinism is that horrible system which teaches that God has foreordained and fixed, by irresistible omnipotence, whatsoever comes to pass; that he has made a very small number on purpose to be saved, and all the rest on purpose to damn them; that an atonement by weight and measure has been made for the elect only, but which is offered to the non-elect on conditions impossible to be complied with, and they are damned for not accepting what did not belong to them, and could not have saved them if they had received it; and that infants as well as adults are included in the decree of reprobation, and that hell is no doubt paved with their bones."

He adds, "It is needless to say that falsehoods more absolute and entire were never stereotyped in the foundry of the father of lies, or with greater industry worked off for gratuitous distribution from age to age."

Now, this language is calculated to make the impression, that none of the doctrines included in the foregoing example, belongs to the system of Calvinism; and yet most, if not all, of the leading doctrines of Calvinism are included in it. Let any one take the Saybrook Platform, or the Presbyterian, or the Baptist Confession of Faith, and compare these alleged falsehoods with what they say on the subjects of predestination, election, atonement, ability, and the future condition of elect infants, and he will be able to estimate properly the disavowal of Dr. B., and likewise the censure with which he assails his opponents.

Besides, he does not profess to have quoted these representations from any Arminian author. The truth is this,—he has thrown in some phraseology which he can contradict with plausibility, and which Arminians never impute to them, such as, "that hell is no doubt paved with their bones"—the bones of infants—and then applies his contradiction to the whole.

Again : It is frequently denied by the members of Calvinistic churches, that those churches are Calvinistic ; whether ignorantly or intentionally, it is not for us to determine. Sometimes the ministers of those churches deny that they are Calvinists. We have often heard of such cases, and are able to adduce one instance as proof. Robert Hall, in a correspondence with the Broadmead church, respecting his sentiments, says, “In the second place, I am *not a Calvinist*, in the strict and proper sense of that term.”—3d vol. p. 19. Again : “On being asked,” says his biographer, “whether he was an Arminian or a Calvinist, he said, ‘Neither, but I believe I recede further from Arminianism than Calvinism.’”—p. 35.

It is due to Mr. Hall to believe that he did not intend to deny that he held any of the doctrines of Calvinism. He meant, no doubt, that on some points he differed from more rigid Calvinists. Probably, the majority of those Calvinists who deny that they are such, are entitled to the benefit of the same explanation. The question before us, is not the morality of such declarations, but the probable effect of them, on the mind of the public.

But the principal cause of the misconception to which we are adverting, is found in their preaching a “free salvation.” There are probably more sermons preached expressly on this subject, and professedly in support of the doctrine at the present day, in Calvinistic than in Arminian churches. And the public have not yet come to understand that the free salvation of the Methodists and that of Calvinists are widely different—that the free salvation of the latter, is one which they can reconcile with the foreordination of all actions and events, and the election of a definite number to eternal life, and reprobation of the rest. In some instances, however, they go so far in their statements of the freeness of salvation, as to directly contradict their creed.

Add to these the consideration that the Old School Calvinists publicly charge those of the New School with abandoning Calvinism, and becoming Arminians, and the fact which we have given as our reason for adducing proofs that they are Calvinists, is abundantly accounted for.

Some may be offended with this article, supposing that it charges the New School portion of the Calvinistic ministry with a want of strict honesty in the publication of their sentiments. This is not our object. We have stated facts, and cannot be answerable for inferences. We cannot deny, however, that the course which some of them have pursued, has often reminded us of the dissimulation of Peter on a certain occasion, for which Paul sharply rebuked him. Nor should any of them be too sensitive, when any thing is said which implies that they have committed a sin, since the most of them disclaim with emphasis, not only the Antinomian doctrine of perfection, which dispenses with the obligation to keep the law, but likewise the doctrine of Scriptural perfection, which consists in strictly keeping the law. If they purposely and systematically teach that neither themselves, nor any other merely human being, ever lived without sin, need they be surprised or indignant if they are sometimes suspected of committing a sin to which circumstances so strongly tempt them?

CHAPTER XXIV.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

WE now enter upon the task of proving that the public teachers of New Divinity are Calvinists.

In the first place, a great number of them are ministers of a Church—the Presbyterian Church—which requires them, in their ordination vow, to affirm their belief in, and pledge themselves to the support of, the doctrines of Calvinism. They were required in their ordination, to answer these questions, among others, in the affirmative, “Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?” “Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel, and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?”—*Westminster Confession of Faith*, p. 378.

As this Confession of Faith may be conveniently accessible to but a very small portion of our readers, we will quote some of its decidedly Calvinistic passages.

With respect to the divine decrees it says, “God, from all eternity, did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.”

Again: “Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass, upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed any thing *because he foresaw it as future*, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

“By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

“These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-

ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished."

The reason by which the choice of Jehovah was influenced in predestinating some to life and others to death is thus stated:—

"Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, *out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes* moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace."

"The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, *whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth*, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."

With respect to the vouchsafement of the necessary means of salvation, this creed says, "As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation. *Neither are any other* redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only."—Chap. iii, p. 15.

This doctrine of election and rejection is thus applied to infants, "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh

when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word."

Of the non-elect in general it is said, "Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some *common* operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may is very pernicious, and to be detested."—Chap. x, p. 33.

On the "Perseverance of the Saints" the Confession runs thus, "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be finally saved.

"This perseverance of the saints depends, *not* upon their *free will*, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof."—Chap. xvi, p. 76.

Will it be said that in *receiving* and *adopting* this Confession of Faith, they did not purpose or profess to receive *all* its doctrines, but, merely, as *containing* the *system* of doctrine taught in the holy Scriptures? This ground some of them have taken, and we readily admit that they differ from the Confession of Faith on some points; for instance, on the doctrines of imputation, ability, atonement, the nature of depravity, regeneration, holiness, and the in

fluences of the Spirit; but the doctrines which we have quoted from the Confession of Faith constitute its distinctive peculiarities; and to suppose that in adopting this creed they so played upon the terms “containing” and “system” as to exclude and reject the very doctrines by which it is distinguished from the creeds of other sects which are directly opposed to it, would be to attribute to them a course which would disgrace even Jesuitism itself. By such a mode of adopting and supporting denominational standards, I might become a Presbyterian or even a Roman Catholic clergyman to-morrow, provided there were nothing in the way of my reception but my opinions. All that would be necessary is, that the creed presented for my adoption should contain a sufficient number of doctrinal announcements for me to extract a *system* from them. I need not receive it as not containing very dangerous errors or as expressing my opinions very clearly. I might look upon its language as quite antiquated and obsolete. It would be enough that it barely *contained* my *system*, which I might make general or particular—to include but few or a greater number of propositions, according to the quantity of materials on hand. It is, therefore, the judgment of charity to suppose that those who have solemnly subscribed to this creed are decided Calvinists, whatever varieties of opinion they may hold on the minor branches of the system.

Secondly. When charged by the judicatories of their Church with disbelieving these doctrines—with having abandoned the Confession of Faith, so far as Calvinism is concerned, and gone over to Arminianism, they defend themselves, not by admitting the truth of the charge, and vindicating their course on the ground that these doctrines of Calvinism are not Scriptural, but by denying the charge, and asserting their orthodoxy. An editorial article in the

Philadelphia Observer, Sept. 28, 1837, a leading New School paper, contains the following:—

“It is now clearly understood that the diversities in doctrinal opinions, of which so much has of late been said, do not exist, or if they exist at all, relate only to those minor shades of difference in the mode of explaining and illustrating truth which have always existed in the Church, and which have never been regarded as an occasion of division or alienation.”

Dr. Beecher, who was arraigned in Cincinnati as a New School man, on the charge of heresy, in the work written expressly for the purpose of vindicating himself before the public, says,—

“The comprehensive charge against me is, that I hold and teach Pelagian and *Arminian* doctrines, in respect to the subject of free agency and accountability, original sin, total depravity, regeneration, and Christian character, contrary to the Confession and the word of God” With reference to this charge he says, “If my doctrinal belief is adverse to the Confession of Faith, as immemorially explained, I am not only not reluctant to go out of the Presbyterian Church, but I am determined not to stay in it.”—p. 14.

Mr. Barnes, who was suspended by the synod of Philadelphia, on the charge of teaching doctrines contrary to the Confession of Faith, assumes the same ground of defence. He says,—

“‘The Protest’ charges the author of the sermon entitled, ‘The Way of Salvation’ with having broached errors opposed to the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church, and in their tendency exceedingly dangerous.”—*Defence*, p. 51. “He is desirous that those who may peruse this Protest may know that the author of the sermon has not in his own view—except in a single expression, in which he believes he coincides with almost

the entire mass of ministers in the Presbyterian Church—deviated from her standards, &c.”—p. 52.

Again: “Before proceeding to the direct consideration of the charges alleged against me, I may be permitted to make a remark on my views of the standards of the Church to which we belong. I have already expressed my belief of the utility of creeds, or articles of faith. Of the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly, I may be allowed to say, that when I expressed my assent to it as ‘a system of doctrines,’ I did it cordially, and that I have never had occasion to regret the act. I then regarded it as I do now, and ever have done, as the best summary of the doctrines of the Bible which I have ever seen, and as expressing my views of the true scheme of Christian theology in a manner far better than any other articles of faith which I have ever examined. The *system of truth* contained there, as distinguished from all other systems—the Socinian, the Pelagian, the Arian, the *Arminian*, &c.—has appeared to me to be the true system; and without hesitation, or fluctuation, I have received it.”—p. 111.

Nor does Mr. B. look upon the language of the Confession of Faith as obscure, liable to be misinterpreted, and requiring a commentary to make it intelligible. “I have thought,” he adds, “that there was, perhaps, somewhat too much of harshness and severity of language in the general cast of that Confession; and that a *few* expressions do not convey, without much laboured exposition, the meaning of the sacred Scriptures. To a few of those expressions, small in number, and not affecting the *system* as a system, I have always taken the exceptions which others have been allowed to do.”—*Ibid.*

And on page 184—“Our Confession of Faith was drawn up by men admirably skilled in the use of language. The terms which are employed are, usually at least, employed

with great precision, and with admirable guards against misconstruction. The men who framed it were profoundly acquainted with the English tongue, and expressed their ideas with great accuracy."

The same sentiment is avowed by Dr. Beecher:—

"The Confession itself, and Catechisms, are made up of the most judicious, concise, and accurate descriptions of doctrine, experience, and practice, ever placed on record. Such as no single mind would have formed, or many minds without that marked providential supervision, which in the same age that he gave us the Bible in a translation not to be rivalled, gave an epitome of its contents, in symbols, which will carry down to the millennium the comprehensive suffrage of the faithful in Christ Jesus."

—*Views in Theology*, p. 233.

Mr. Barnes appealed from the decision of the synod to the next general assembly, which held its session in Pittsburg in the year 1836. The assembly, having a majority of New School men, sustained the appeal, and restored Mr. B. to his former standing, on the ground that he had not departed from the Confession of Faith. Drs. Philips and Hoge, of the opposite party, protested against this decision of the assembly. The protest was referred to a committee. In the answer, which was read by Dr. Skinner, there is the following passage:—

"So far is the assembly from countenancing the errors alleged in the charges of Dr. Junkin, that they do cordially and *ex-animo* adopt the Confession of Faith of our Church, on the points of doctrine in question, according to the obvious and most prevalent interpretation; and do regard it, as a whole, as the best epitome of the doctrines of the Bible ever formed. And the assembly disavows any desire, and would deprecate any attempt, to change the phraseology of our standards, and would disapprove of any language of light estimation applied to them; be-

lieving that no denomination can prosper whose members permit themselves to speak slightly of its formularies of doctrine ; and are ready to unite with their brethren in contending earnestly for the faith of our standards.”—*Presbyterian*, June 25, 1836.

Numerous passages might be cited from the “Opinions” of individual members of the assembly, “delivered in the case of Mr. B.,” but it is unnecessary, as the report containing the extract above was adopted by the assembly, and is therefore the official declaration of the party.

Nor can it be said that they have changed their doctrines since the division of the Church. The New, or “Constitutional Assembly,” as they style themselves, adopted the following resolution unanimously, at their session of 1838 :—

“That it be, and hereby is recommended to all the presbyteries to *take special pains* to have the book containing the Confession of Faith and form of government of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America more generally circulated among the churches under their care.”

And in their “Pastoral Letter” they say, “We love and honour the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, as containing more well-defined, fundamental truth, with less defect, than appertains to any other human formula of doctrine, and as calculated to hold in intelligent concord a greater number of sanctified minds than any which could now be formed ; and we disclaim all design, past, present, and future, to change it.”—*Phil. Observer*, Oct. 11, 1838.

CHAPTER XXV.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

IN continuation of the argument to prove that the New School party are Calvinists, we shall next adduce some of their avowals of the doctrines of that system.

And as circumstances have assigned to Mr. Barnes great pre-eminence among the champions of that party, we shall examine his sentiments first.

It is an interesting fact, and one which belongs to the history of this controversy, that Mr. B. wrote his sermon on "The Way of Salvation," which has involved him in so much difficulty with his orthodox brethren, purposely, in defence of Calvinism. A short time previous to its publication, a powerful revival of religion occurred, in the Methodist church, in Morristown, New-Jersey, where Mr. B. was settled. By some means, the doctrines of Calvinism were brought up for discussion before the community. Mr. B. preached a sermon on the "Sovereignty of God," in which he endeavoured to defend the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. This sermon was ably reviewed by the Rev. Nathaniel Porter, of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In continuation of this controversy, Mr. B. preached and published the sermon first named. This sermon was supposed by some of his brethren to contain principles fatal to Calvinism, and was made the ground of ecclesiastical prosecution.

We find a pretty free development of Mr. B.'s Calvinism in his introduction to "Butler's Analogy," in which he proposes "to give a specimen of the argument from analogy in support of the Christian religion." He introduces the subject of Calvinism in the following manner: "There is still a more important branch of the argument untouched

—the analogy of the Christian scheme, as we understand it, to the course of nature, and the fact that all the objections urged against *Calvinism* lie against the actual order of events.”—p. 31.

After adverting to some other topics, he takes up the subject of predestination. He does not venture at once upon a clear statement of his views on this subject. He commences by saying, “Religion affirms that God exerts the power which he puts forth in pursuance of a plan or purpose definitely fixed before the foundation of the world.” The terms “plan” and “purpose” recur incessantly, as if they fully expressed the doctrine under consideration. He talks about the opponents of Calvinism doubting and denying that God has a plan, or purpose, or decree. But his meaning is easily gathered from the tenor of his argument, and from occasional expressions. For instance, it is the doctrine to which Arminians are opposed, that he undertakes to defend. He goes on to say, “And we know of no single doctrine that has been more universally *conceded* by infidels to be in the Scriptures; none in the Bible that has been so often brought forward among their alleged reasons for rejecting it as a revelation; none that has so frequently crossed the path of wicked men, and revealed the secret of the rebellion of their hearts; none that has called forth so much misplaced ingenuity from Socinians and *Arminians*,” &c. Without taking up the question whether *infidels* make the doctrine that God has purposes, or a plan, simply, the ground of their objections to revelation, we proceed to state, that Arminians are not opposed to the doctrine that God has a plan, or to the doctrine of predestination simply, but to that which is so clearly stated in the Confession of Faith of Mr. B.’s Church—that God has ordained *whatsoever comes to pass*. To deny that God has a plan, would seem to be equal to a denial that God has any fixed and ascertained principles of moral govern-

ment. But what Arminian denies this? Can it be possible that Mr. B. is so ignorant of the system he opposes, as to imagine his representation of it correct? To settle this question, we will refer to an Arminian writer:—Dr. Adam Clarke says, on Eph. i, 5, “Here the word [predestinated] is used to point out God’s fixed purpose or predestination to bestow on the gentiles the blessing of the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ; which adoption had been before granted to the Jewish people: and without circumcision, or any other Mosaic rite, to admit the gentiles to all the privileges of his Church and people. And the apostle marks, that *all this was fore-determined by God*, as he had fore-determined the bounds and precincts of the land which he gave to them according to the promise made to their fathers. That the Jews had no reason to complain, for God had *formed this purpose* before he had given the law, or called them out of Egypt; for it was before the foundation of the world, (ver. 2,) and that, therefore, the conduct of God in calling the gentiles now, bringing them into his Church, and conferring on them the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, was in pursuance of his *original design*; and if he did not do so, his *eternal purposes* could not be fulfilled.” The reader will perceive, that there is no hesitancy on the part of Arminians in attributing to God predeterminations, original designs, and eternal purposes. But because God has predestinated *some* events, they do not feel at liberty to infer that he has predestinated *every event*, especially as the Scriptures deny that such is the case. We infer, then, that if Mr. B. knows what doctrine of predestination it is to which Arminians are opposed, he means more by the terms purpose, plan, &c., than their true import discloses.

He exhibits his views more fully as he proceeds to show that his doctrine does not interfere with the freedom of human actions. He adverts to the influence which

the "plans or purposes" of men have on their fellow-men, and thus brings his argument to its conclusion: "In all these, and ten thousand other cases, there is a plan formed by *other beings* in respect to *us*, which finally enters as a controlling element of our destiny. If it be said that they all leave us free, so we say of the decrees of God, that we have a like consciousness of freedom. In neither case does the foreign influence cripple or destroy our freedom; in neither case does it make any difference whether the plan was formed *an hour* before the *act*, or has stood fixed for ages. All that could bear on our freedom would be the fact, that the purpose was *previous to the deed*—a circumstance which does not alter the act itself, whether the decree be formed by ourselves, by other men, or by God."—p. 50. We now begin to ascertain the nature of the plans and purposes formed by other beings, in respect to us. This passage connects the decree of God with human actions. It represents him as foreordaining human actions. It makes no difference, we are told, as to our freedom, whether the plan was formed an hour before the *act*, or has stood for ages; or whether the act was decreed by ourselves, by others, *or by God*. We would suggest a thought which seems not to have occurred to Mr. B. when penning this analogy; that it may depend on the nature of the influence which men exert on each other, whether the parties acting under the influence, or those exerting it, are responsible for the acts induced.

Mr. B. expresses himself decisively on page 53. "But on this point the entire movement of the world bears the marks of being conducted according to a plan. We defy a man to lay his finger on a fact which has not such a relation to other facts as to show that it is a part of a scheme—and if of a scheme, *then of a purpose formed beforehand*." This is plain enough. No man, we are assured, can specify a fact which is not a part of a scheme,

and of course a part of a purpose formed beforehand. He is speaking of the connection of events with the purposes of God, and must of course be understood to lay down the doctrine that all actions and events are a part of God's scheme, and purposed beforehand. He adverts to several facts in illustration of this doctrine: "Alexander the Great, in the vigour of life, and in the full career of conquest, was cut off by the *act of God*. Julian the Apostate, in the same regions, found also an early death, and his gigantic plans were arrested by the hand of *God* with reference to other great purposes in the liberty or religion of man. Napoleon met the mighty *arm of God* in the snows of the north, and the monarch fell—and with him fell the last purpose of his life. In the midst of daring schemes man often falls. *God wields the dart* to strike in an unusual manner, and the victim dies. He falls in with the great plans of the Deity, meets snows, or lightnings, or burning heats, or piercing colds that come around by the direction of the Governor of the world, and the man sinks, and his plans give way to the higher purposes of the Almighty."—p. 53.

This is indeed a very choice selection of facts; but it would not be difficult for "a man to lay his finger" on a few others which, according to this doctrine, are equally a part of God's scheme and purpose—such, for instance, as the transgression of Adam, the murder of Abel by his brother, or any other murder. We would also suggest, whether the apostacy of Julian was not as certainly a fact as his death; and whether we are not required to believe that Napoleon fell in with the plans of the Deity in forming his "daring schemes" as much as when he met the snows or lightnings; and whether, indeed, he could have any "plans" which were not purposed beforehand by the Almighty?

There is a passage not less decisive in his Notes on

Rom. viii, 29: "The event which was thus foreknown must have been, for some cause, *certain* and *fixed*, since an uncertain event could not be possibly foreknown. To talk of foreknowing a contingent event as certain which may or may not exist, is an absurdity." We are here instructed that an event could not possibly be foreknown, unless it were fixed, and that to talk of foreknowing a contingent event, which is explained to be one which may or may not exist, is an absurdity. If, then, God foreknew all things, it is absurd to say of any past event, that it might not have existed, or of any future event, that it may or may not exist. Every event therefore is eternally fixed. He adds, "In what way such an event became certain is not determined by the use of the word. But it must have been somehow in connection with a *divine appointment* or arrangement, since no other way can be conceived to be certain." We have now fairly before us the doctrine which Mr. B. is desirous to establish, and to which Arminians are opposed—that no event is contingent—that all the actions of men are decreed—that all events are fixed by divine appointment. And if we connect with the above what he says on Rom. ix, 19, we shall have the additional sentiment, that God's purposes are never defeated, but that every thing comes to pass as it is decreed. The passage referred to reads as follows: "This does not mean that no one had offered resistance or opposition to God, but that no one had done it successfully. God had accomplished his purposes in spite of their opposition."

We have one more passage, beyond which it is impossible for the most *ultra* predestinarian to go. It is found on page 43 of the Introductory Essay:—"We interpret the decrees of God, so far as we can do it, *by facts*; and we say that the actual *result*, by whatever means brought about, is the expression of the *design* of God."

Mr. B. deserves, however, the credit of handling this "high mystery" with "special caution."

Next comes the doctrine of the election of some to eternal life, and the rejection of others, without any thing in their moral character operating as a moving cause of their election or rejection. Mr. B. enlarges on the inequality with which the blessings of Providence, and the gifts of nature, are dispensed, and argues from it as follows: "Now we might as well object to this fixed economy of things as to that which affirms that God dispenses the blessings of redemption according to his good pleasure. If God may confer one blessing on one individual which he withholds from another, we ask why he may not be a sovereign also in the dispensation of other favours? We ask what principle of justice and goodness is violated if he imparts *penitence* and *faith* to one individual, that is not violated also if he gives him health while another pines in sickness? We ask with emphasis, where is there more partiality in giving the Christian's hope to Brainerd or Martyn than there is in giving great talents to Newton, or great wealth to Cræsus?"

There is no difficulty in understanding the drift of this reasoning. It is argued that God dispenses the gifts of nature and providence, and the spiritual blessings necessary to salvation, on the same principle; that he gives penitence, and faith, and the Christian's hope, on the same principle on which he gives great talents or wealth; that he may do in respect to religion as he does in respect to health. Now if it be understood that he always confers the gifts of nature and providence because of the faith and obedience of those whom he distinguishes, the analogy will hold good. But this cannot be Mr. B.'s meaning. He evidently intends that, as God may confer great wealth, or talents, or health, without reference to the conduct of the parties favoured, he may so confer the blessings of

salvation; and that as no man is injured, if God fails to confer on him superior talents, so no man is injured if God, on the same principle, withholds what is necessary to salvation.

This doctrine is more pointedly set forth in his notes on Rom. ix, 11: "For the children being not yet born, having done neither good nor evil," &c., he says, "This is a very important passage in regard to the question about the purposes of God. (1.) They had done nothing good or bad, &c. Again, (3.) The purpose of God is antecedent to the formation of character, or the performance of any actions, good or bad. (4.) It is not a purpose formed, *because* he sees any thing in the individuals as a ground for his choice, but for some reason which he has not explained, and which in the Scripture is simply called *purpose* and *good pleasure*, Eph. i, 5. (5.) If it existed in this case, it does in others. If it was right then, it is right now. And if God then dispensed his favours on this principle, he will now." And on the next verse, "It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger," he remarks, "There was a reference here to the whole train of temporal and spiritual blessings which were to be connected with the two races of people. If it be asked how this bears on the argument of the apostle, we may reply, (1.) That it settles the principle that God might make a distinction among men, in the same nation, and the same family, without regard to their works or character. (2.) That he might confer his blessings on such as he pleased. (3.) If this is done in regard to nations, it may be in regard to individuals. The principle is the same, and the justice the same. If it be supposed to be unjust in God to make such a distinction in regard to individuals, it is surely no less so to make a distinction in regard to nations. The fact that numbers are thus favoured does not make it the more proper, or remove any difficulty. (4.) If

this distinction may be made in regard to *temporal* things, why not in regard to *spiritual* things? The *principle* must still be the same. If unjust in one case, it would be in the other. The fact that it is done in one case proves also that it will be in the other, for the same great principle will run through all the dealings of the divine government. And as men do not, and cannot complain that God makes a distinction among them in regard to talents, health, beauty, prosperity, and rank, neither can they complain if he acts also as a sovereign in the distribution of his spiritual favours. They therefore who regard this as referring only to temporal and national privileges gain no relief in respect to the real difficulty in the case, for the unanswerable question would still be asked, Why has not God made all men equal in every thing? Why has he made any distinction among men? The only reply to such inquiries is, ‘Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.’”

Here it is contended that the election, by which one of the children was distinguished from the other, before they were born, was not only national, but individual; that the privileges to which one was elected, and from which the other was excluded, were not only temporal but spiritual; that if such a distinction has been made in one case, it has in others; that if God can, without injustice, withhold from some the temporal favours he confers on others, such as health, beauty, talents, prosperity, and rank, he can, on the same principle, without injustice, withhold the spiritual blessings necessary to salvation; that the principle is the same; and that if any one asks the reason why God saves some, and not others, it is not to be stated, as a cause, that one was penitent and believing, and the other impenitent; “the *only* reply” that can be given is, that it was good in the sight of God.

Again, on “I will have mercy on whom I will have

mercy," &c., he says, "On whom I *choose* to bestow mercy. The *mode* he does not explain. But there could not be a more positive declaration of these truths, (1.) That he does it as a sovereign, without giving an account of the reason of his choice to any. (2.) That he does it without regard to any claim on the part of man; or that man is regarded as destitute of merit, and as having no right to his mercy. (3.) That he will do it to any extent which he pleases, and in whatever time and manner may best accord with his own good pleasure. (4.) *That he has regard to a definite number; and that on that number he intends to bestow eternal life*; and, (5.) That no one has a right to complain. It is proof of his benevolence that *any* are saved; and where none have a claim, where all are justly condemned, he has a right to pardon whom he pleases."

Again, on the next verse, he gives us to understand that the salvation of the sinner is not dependent on, or promoted by, his effort to that end, but results wholly from the partiality of God. He tells us "that he is pardoned, not *on account* of his effort; not because he makes an exertion; but because God chooses to pardon him." Again: "Weep and strive he may, but in this there is no ground of claim on God for pardon; and, after all, he is dependent on his mere sovereign mercy, a lost, ruined, and helpless sinner, to be saved or lost at his will."

Whether it would be just or unjust in God, before his creatures are born, to elect some to eternal life, and leave others in circumstances which will infallibly secure their sinning and damnation; whether God withholds temporal favours, and the blessings necessary to salvation, on the same principle; and whether the justice is the same in both cases, or not, one thing is plain, that, according to this scheme, it is great folly to talk of a free salvation. What manifest inconsistency for a man to offer salvation to all, and require all to repent, believe, and hope, when

he holds that God "imparts penitence and faith," and "gives the Christian's hope," to a definite number, elected to this distinction before they were born, and withholds these blessings from others; and that this is the sole reason why some sinners are saved, and others are not! But we have our doubts, whether the principle and justice of withholding temporal and spiritual favours are precisely the same. God may withhold temporal things, and thereby promote our spiritual advantage and final salvation; but to withhold all spiritual blessings excludes all hope throughout eternity. We can easily approve of the purpose of electing one of those children to special temporal privileges, and of assigning the other a relation of inferiority in these respects, before they were born, and wholly irrespective of their works; but the doctrine that one unborn child is elected to eternal life, and another consigned to a destitution of all the blessings necessary to salvation, is to us a revolting dogma—a heresy most hateful, if not blasphemous.

Mr. B. also holds the Calvinistic doctrine of infallible perseverance. On chap. viii, 30, he says, "This proves, therefore, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. There is a connection infallible and ever existing between the predestination and the final salvation." And in a note to his sermon on "The Way of Salvation," referring to John x, 27, 28, he says, "This single passage settles all controversy about the doctrine of falling from grace. Admitting that it had ever been the intention of Christ to teach the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, it could not have been done in more explicit language."—*Defence*, p. 37.

We have Mr. B.'s views of the manner in which God treats the non-elect, in his comment on the case of Pharaoh. On verse 17, he says, "This passage is designed to illustrate the doctrine, that God shows mercy accord-

ing to his sovereign pleasure by a reference to one of the most extraordinary cases of hardness of heart which has ever occurred. The design is to show that God has a right to pass by those to whom he does not choose to show mercy; and to place them in circumstances where they shall develop their true character, and where in fact they shall become more hardened, and be destroyed."

And again, on verse 18, he says, "The word *hardeneth* means only to harden in the manner specified in the case of Pharaoh. It does not mean to exert a positive influence, but to leave a sinner to his own course, and to place him in circumstances where the character will be more and more developed.—*See note*, John xii, 40. It implies, however, an act of sovereignty on the part of God in thus leaving him to his chosen course, and in not putting forth that influence by which he could be saved from death. *Why* this is, the apostle does not state." Mr. B. does not look on Pharaoh as one who might have been saved, but from whom the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn, in consequence of resistance, and whose existence was continued beyond that period for the purposes mentioned. God, as an act of sovereignty, passed him by—left him to his own course—declined putting forth that influence by which he could be saved from death. And from the following language it is plain that this commentator considers the course pursued toward Pharaoh as an example of the course pursued toward the non-elect in general.

"The case of Pharaoh was *one instance* or illustration of the general principle on which God would deal with men. His government is conducted on great and uniform principles; and the case of Pharaoh was a development of the great laws on which he governs the universe."—v. 23.

Great efforts are made by many modern Calvinistic writers, to prove that the eternal election of some does

not imply a positive decree of reprobation respecting the rest; and that while one class is elected there may be no decree whatever as to the course and destiny of the other, but they may be merely passed by, not elected, &c. It seems to be felt that if God be supposed to decree their reprobation, as he decrees the salvation of the elect, his justice and goodness are placed in an inauspicious light. We have already shown, that, whether the attributes of Jehovah are vindicated or not by such arguments, the case of the non-elect is one of utter hopelessness from the beginning, and that to offer salvation to all is useless, if not madness. Either what is done for the elect is not necessary for their salvation, or the damnation of the non-elect is inevitable. But the language of Mr. B. does not accord with these plausible speculations. According to his representations, God not only declines putting forth the influence by which they may be saved from death, but places them in circumstances calculated to develop their character as sinners. This latter sentiment he affirms again and again. Now compare this with his challenge, to any man, to produce a fact which is not a part of the divine purpose, with his argument to prove that whatever is foreknown is fixed by the appointment of God, and with his declaration that the actual result, by whatever means brought about, is the expression of the design of God, and those wire-drawn speculations are given to the winds.

We would notify the reader that it is not our present object to refute Calvinism; but merely to prove that it is held by the New School party. Its refutation is much the easier task. Put together, then, the ordination vow of Mr. B., which he has never regretted, his declarations of adherence to the Confession of Faith, and his assertion of its leading doctrines, and the conclusion is irresistible that he is a Calvinist, whatever else he may be.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

THE part which Dr. Skinner performed in the General Assembly of 1836, is sufficient to identify him with the class of theologians under review. He is a leading man among them. He classed himself with them, in a very decided manner, in a speech delivered in the case of Mr. Barnes. He remarked, "It has been said that there was no trouble in Philadelphia before Mr. Barnes came there. I, sir, had trouble there on account of my doctrinal sentiments. How could it be said that there was no trouble there until Mr. Barnes came, when I was spoken of as the first of that kidney in the city? If you condemn Mr. Barnes, you condemn all of us." Again: "These are our peculiarities: they do not exclude us from the Presbyterian Church. Now the question is, whether this class shall any longer be tolerated in the Presbyterian Church. Mr. Barnes is not distinguished from the class: he is a fair sample of the class. We do not consider him as by any means an ultra among us."

That Dr. Skinner is a Calvinist, is fully demonstrated by the terms of his ordination vow, and his declared approval of the Westminster Confession of Faith, not only in respect to its doctrines, but also its phraseology. But we proposed to furnish our readers with distinct avowals of Calvinistic doctrine. In the speech just alluded to, Dr. S. professes to state the doctrines which the "New School hold and preach, in common, as they suppose, with their Old School brethren." We shall commence our quotations with the fourth article, as there is nothing in those which precede it, relevant to our present purpose. According to this statement, they believe, and of course Dr. S. believes—

"4. That the influence of the Spirit of God in effectual

calling is supernatural and sovereign, and as to the mode of its exercise is incomprehensible.

“5. That those who in time are effectually called by the Spirit of God were chosen to salvation through Christ, and that this election is sovereign, not grounded on foreseen holiness in the elect, but unto holiness, or that they might be holy.

“6. That the renewed persevere in holiness to the end, but not by virtue of any power or principle of holiness in themselves, but by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, working in them to will and to do, and thus securing their activity and perseverance.

“7. That the happiness of the elect is perfect and eternal ; and that the non-elect, for their sin, are punished in hell for ever.”

This is not a full and undisguised declaration of the Calvinistic creed. It may be considered as “containing” or implying the system, rather than explicitly stating it. There is nothing in the fourth article to which an Arminian can object, taking the words according to their usual meaning. The term “sovereign” contains the Calvinism of this article. In Calvinistic parlance it does not mean, merely, that God acts as a sovereign in the dispensation of his favours—a doctrine which no one is disposed to deny—but that he exercises his sovereignty by electing some to the enjoyment of those spiritual blessings connected with salvation, and by withholding them from others ; and that, in making the selection, he is governed solely by his own pleasure, and not by any thing in the moral character of the parties chosen or rejected. The article on election, in which he affirms that it is “sovereign,” explains what he means by that term, viz., that the election is not “grounded on foreseen holiness in the elect, but unto holiness, or that they might be holy.”

We gather, then, from this exhibition, the following

amount of genuine Calvinism :—That God has elected some men to final salvation, exclusive of others ; that these persons are elected, not because they are penitent and believing, or differ in their moral character from the non-elect, but that they, being unholy like the non-elect, “ might become holy ;” that God acts upon this principle in the dispensation of the necessary spiritual influence, granting the effectual calling to none but the elect ; that the elect invariably persevere unto the end, and that their perseverance is not attributable, in whole or in part, to any power or principle of holiness in themselves, but to the Holy Spirit, vouchsafed to them on the principle of sovereignty, on which they were elected.

The short creed, or form of admission into the Mercer-street Presbyterian Church, of which Dr. S. is the pastor, contains two, and but two Calvinistic articles. They are as follows :—“ You believe that no man of himself embraces this way of salvation unless induced and determined so to do by the agency of the Holy Spirit ; and that this agency is exerted in a free and sovereign manner, according to the counsel of infinite wisdom and goodness.

“ You believe that the subjects of the Holy Spirit’s renewing influence are, in some degree, holy as God is holy ; and submit themselves absolutely to God’s will as the law of their being ; and though but imperfectly sanctified while in this world, do, by God’s grace, persevere in resisting sin and following holiness, until they pass into the heavenly state.”

These articles of belief are so cautiously worded that most persons not versed in inquiries of this description, or not very much on their guard, would fail to detect in them any thing like Calvinism. But when we take into view the theological meaning which Calvinists attach to the word “ sovereign,” the secret is laid open ; and the articles in question are clearly understood to mean, that

God selects from among the unholy, as unholy, the subjects of the Holy Spirit's agency ; that this agency not only induces, but *determines* them to embrace the way of salvation, and that those thus selected invariably persevere, although but imperfectly sanctified in this world, until they pass into the heavenly state.

But if we may infer the doctrines of the pastor from those taught to the children in the sabbath school of the church, subject to his pastoral oversight, we are in possession of a very plain exhibition of the sentiments of Dr. S. on this subject. We have before us a copy of the Catechism used in his sabbath school. Its title is, "The Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines ; with Scriptural Questions and Answers. By the Rev. Matthew Henry, D. D., Author of the Commentary on the Bible. Also, A Familiar Exposition of the Lord's Prayer, in the form of Question and Answer, by the Rev. William Patton." It is based on the "Shorter Catechism," and differs from it in these respects :—First, between the questions and answers of the Shorter Catechism there is a series of questions with negative or affirmative answers, as the case may require, and a short passage of Scripture, connected with each answer, to be repeated by the scholar in confirmation of it. Secondly, it contains an exposition of the Lord's prayer in the form of question and answer. The reader will now be prepared for the extracts bearing on the question before us. First come the question and answer of the Shorter Catechism. We begin with the seventh question.

"Q. 7. *What are the decrees of God?*

"A. The decrees of God are his eternal purposes, according to the counsel of his own will ; whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."

Then the questions and Scripture answers, among which

are the following :—“ *Does God dispose of all things that come to pass?* Yes : ‘My times are in thy hand,’ Psa. xxxi, 15. *Does he do it according to his own will?* Yes : for ‘he hath done whatsoever he pleased,’ Psa. cxv, 2. *Were all the events of time ordained from eternity?* Yes : ‘He performeth the thing that is appointed for me,’ Job xxiii, 14. *Does every thing come to pass as God has ordained it?* Yes : for there are many devices in a man’s heart ; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.”

“ Q. 8. *How does God execute his decrees?*

“ A. God executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence.”

Under this we have, among others, the following questions and answers :—“ *Shall all God’s decrees be executed?* Yes : ‘for the Lord of hosts hath sworn, Surely as I have thought, so shall it surely come to pass,’ Isa. xiv, 24. *Can any of them be defeated?* No : for ‘the Lord hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?’ Isa. xiv, 27.”

“ Q. 20. *Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?*

“ A. God, having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to eternal life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of a state of sin and misery, and to bring them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer.”

Then we have the following interesting amplification for the benefit of youthful minds.

“ *Did God particularly design the salvation of a portion of mankind?* Yes : ‘there is a remnant according to the election of grace,’ Rom. xi, 5. *Are there some whom God has chosen?* Yes : ‘God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit,’ 2 Thess. ii, 3. *Is there a certain number of such?* Yes : for ‘their names are in the book of life,’ Phil. iv, 3 ; Rev.

xiii, 8. *Were they chosen from eternity?* Yes: 'he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,' Eph. i, 4. *Were they chosen for the sake of any thing in themselves?* No: 'ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,' John xv, 16. *But of his mere good pleasure?* Yes: 'he hath predestinated us according to the good pleasure of his will,' Eph. i, 5. *Were they chosen to salvation as the end?* Yes: 'God hath appointed us to obtain salvation,' 1 Thess. v, 9. *And to sanctification as the means?* Yes: 'he has chosen us that we should be holy,' Eph. i, 4. *Was it for the glory of God?* Yes: that he 'might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy.'

"Q. 21. *Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?*

"A. The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man; and so was and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever."

Under this leading question and answer we have a sample of Calvinistic free salvation—"Is he a universal Redeemer? Yes: 'he gave himself a ransom for all,' 1 Tim. ii, 6. *Did he die to purchase a general offer?* Yes: 'the Son of man was lifted up, that whosoever believes in him should not perish,' John iii, 14, 15. *Is Christ, in a special manner, the Redeemer of the elect?* Yes: 'I lay down my life for the sheep,' John x, 15. *Was their salvation particularly designed in Christ's undertaking?* Yes: 'thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him,' John xvii, 2."

"Q. 30. *How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?*

"A. The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

"Does the Spirit work faith in us? Yes: 'it is the faith of the operation of God,' Col. ii, 12. *Shall it be wrought*

in all the chosen? Yes: 'for it is the faith of God's elect.' Tit. i, 1. *Are we united to Christ in our effectual calling?* Yes: 'for we are called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,' 1 Cor. i, 9. *Will the common call unite us to Christ?* No: 'for many are called, but few are chosen,' Matt. xxii, 14. *Is it the effectual call that does it?* Yes: 'for whom he called, them he justified,' Rom. viii, 10."

And under the next question and answer of the Shorter Catechism, which relate to effectual calling, we find the following:—" *Is it the grace of God that turns us to him?* Yes: 'the Lord opened the heart of Lydia,' Acts xvi, 14. *Is it special grace?* Yes: 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,' Rom. ix, 16. *Shall this grace be given to all the elect?* Yes: 'all that the Father hath given me shall come unto me,' John vi, 37. *Shall it be effectual?* Yes: 'his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain,' 1 Cor. xv, 10. *Can any turn to God without this special grace?* No: 'for no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him,' John vi, 44."

"Q. 36. *What are the benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?*

"A. The benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

"*Shall true believers persevere to the end?* Yes: 'for He that hath begun a good work will perform it,' Phil. i, 6. *Will hypocrites persevere?* No: 'these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away,' Luke viii, 13. *Does it appear by their apostacy that they were never sincere?* Yes: 'they went out from us.

because they were not of us ; for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us,' 1 John ii, 19. *But shall any that are justified finally fall away?* No : 'for whom he justified, them he glorified,' Rom. vii, 30. *Can true grace be finally lost?* No : it is 'that good part which shall never be taken away,' " &c., &c.

We presume that this is sufficiently plain for the understanding even of Methodists, who are esteemed, by some Calvinists, to be remarkably dull of apprehension on such subjects. This catechism teaches that all the events of time were ordained from eternity ; that every thing comes to pass as God ordained it ; that God executes his own decrees, which extend to every event of time, and that none of them can be defeated ; that he has from eternity particularly designed to save, and chosen to salvation, a portion of mankind, not for the sake of any thing in themselves, but of his mere good pleasure, and that the number of such is predetermined ; that special grace is required to enable any to turn to God ; that this grace is given to all the elect, and is effectual in every instance ; that, although Christ is a universal Redeemer, and died to purchase a general offer, he is in a special manner the Redeemer of God's elect, and that their salvation was particularly designed in his undertaking ; that none but the elect are true believers ; that they can never fall away and be lost ; and that all who make a profession of religion and fall away, are hypocrites.

We are not a little tempted to enlarge on the inconsistency of covering up these doctrines so carefully in the "Form of Admission" into the church ; of reprobating in the dedication sermon the inculcation of sectarian peculiarities ; of publishing the sermon for general circulation at the request of the officers of the church, and then introducing these doctrines into the sabbath school, exuberant as they appear in this catechism, and instilling them

into the minds of children ; but with this hint, we will leave our readers to their own reflections.

We would here remind the reader that the Rev. Dr. Patton, one of the authors of this catechism, is a leading New School man ; and was a prominent actor in the separation which took place in the General Assembly of 1838, and also in the doings of the new Assembly.

One passage, expressive of Dr. Beecher's sentiments, may suffice for the present. He says, " I have no sympathy for the opinion that it depends on sinners whether they be regenerated or not in the day of His power—or that God does all he can, and leaves the event of submission or not to rebel man—and that sinners make themselves to differ, and are in fact the self-determining authors of their own regeneration. The passages quoted to prove such an assertion are misunderstood and perverted."—*Views in Theology*, p. 209.

We have from the Rev. Dr. Cox, in his work on Quakerism, the following avowal, which it would be difficult to misinterpret : " Respecting predestination, without discussing a subject so extensive, so sinned against—not sinning, and so glorious and fundamental, I would affectionately suggest the following things : 1. It is both foolish and unfair to charge its alleged difficulties, as it is often done in this country, on Presbyterianism, or Calvinism. Before either of these existed, the very difficulties—which are wholly *relative*, and result from our ignorance, and folly, and unbelief alone—existed and were amply known. The premises of the doctrine are *fully* contained in Barclay's *Apology* ; since they are ultimately resolvable into the attributes of the INFINITE GOD. Omniscience—who can deny ?—eternally knows all things, and anticipates them infallibly, in a system over which God presides, which he created and constantly upholds. For, 'although in relation to the

foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immediately and infallibly, yet by the same providence he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.'—*Presbyterian Confession of Faith*, chap. v, sect. 2. No absolute contingency exists; yet all relative contingencies, such to us (and the world is full of them) are infallibly and economically foreknown in the system, and most wisely ordered and overruled by the eternal owner of all things. The means and the end of every related series are reciprocally connected and mutually dependent in the constitution of God."—*Quakerism not Christianity*, p. 660.

In this passage we are told that, in consequence of the decree of God, all things come to pass immediately and infallibly; that no absolute contingency exists; and that relative contingencies are all ordered, as well as overruled, by God.

The state of theology in the Baptist and Congregational churches generally, is the same as in the Presbyterian Church. They are Calvinistic, and divided into parties, which, if not distinguished by the appellations, Old School and New School, are known by the same doctrinal differences. Fuller, Hall, and Hinton among Baptists, are leading advocates of New Divinity, and yet decided Calvinists. We have before us the articles of belief of a New Divinity Baptist Church, in Stanton-street, New-York, which is supposed by some, to be quite Arminian. It is under the pastoral care of the Rev. George Benedict, a warm advocate apparently for free salvation. It contains the following sentiments:—

“We believe—

“Art. IV. That it is the duty of all mankind to repent of their sins, and believe upon Christ the Redeemer, and that the guilt and final misery of those who reject the gos-

pel will be greatly *augmented* by their unbelief, but that from the enmity of the human heart, *none will come to Christ* except by the special influences of the Holy Spirit, sent forth to effect within them the work of regeneration.

“Art. V. That all who are thus brought to repentance and faith receive the grace of regeneration, not of their own merit, but of God’s free grace, that they were chosen in Christ to salvation before the foundation of the world, and that nothing can separate them from the love of God, but they shall be kept by his power through faith unto salvation, the sure and final proof of their genuine faith consisting in the continuance of their attachment and obedience to Christ, to the end of their present life.”

Here it is most explicitly avowed that none will come to Christ without the special influence of the Holy Spirit; that all who were regenerated by it were chosen in Christ to this distinction before the foundation of the world, and that nothing can defeat their salvation. There is, then, this grand distinction between those who are saved and those who are lost—the former were elected to salvation before they were born, the latter were not. It is not our intention to controvert this doctrine, but we would suggest, that if the songs of the redeemed are to be influenced by the principles on which their salvation is achieved, and any of these non-elect, whose duty it is to repent of their sins and believe in Christ, should happen to perform their duty, and be saved, they will compose a choir by themselves; for while others celebrate eternal election, and special influences, they will be compelled to hymn the praises of natural ability, and common grace.

Probably some of our readers have supposed, that, at least, Mr. Finney, and his immediate disciples, are free from Calvinism. This is not the case. He gives his views of election in a sermon on this subject. After

stating in several propositions what it is not, he proceeds to state positively what it is. He says: "But by the doctrine of election is intended that a part of the human family are chosen to eternal salvation; that not only are they chosen as a whole, but as individuals, every one of whom will be finally saved." He gives us to understand that the elect are chosen to salvation previous to their conversion. One of his negative propositions says: "Nor that the *unconverted elect* are any better than the non-elect." Again he proposes to "show when the election was made," and on this point remarks, "The apostle says it was before the world began, or from eternity."

Here, then, we have the election of a certain number of individuals to eternal salvation, from eternity, every one of whom will be finally saved, leaving none to be damned, but those who are not thus elected.

Mr. F. attempts to vindicate the proceedings of God, in this election, from the charge of impartiality and injustice. He tells us that the atonement is sufficient for all; that God offers mercy to all; that God as strongly desires the salvation of the non-elect; and that the only reason why the non-elect will not be saved, is because they pertinaciously refuse salvation. But he has already destroyed this pretence by assuring us that the elect were no better than the non-elect; this therefore, cannot be the cause of the difference in their destiny. He also informs us that God, in confining election to those whom he has elected, has done the best he could for the whole universe. He intimates that it might have caused terrible confusion had he elected more persons, or others than those he has elected; that in "the best possible administration of his government he can bring sufficient amount of moral influence to bear on the elect to convert them, and that it is a contradiction to say that the same amount of moral influence can be brought to bear upon every individual of the

human family." But with suitable deference to Mr. F.'s acumen, we feel prompted to declare that we cannot see what great harm could have resulted to angels or men, from the election, conversion, holiness, and salvation of all, on the same principle; since the atonement is sufficient for all, and God desired the salvation of all, and the moral character of the elect, when elected to salvation, was no better than that of the reprobate.

According to the Arminian doctrine of election, it is easy to prove the impartiality and justice of God in saving some and damning others, but on the Calvinistic system it is utterly impossible.

Dr. Taylor, of New-Haven, in a letter to Dr. Hawes, in which he states his theological opinions in view of the fact that his orthodoxy was called in question, makes the following avowals:—

"I believe,—

"2. That the eternal purposes of God extend to all actual events, sin not excepted; or that God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass, and so executes these purposes as to leave the free moral agency of man unimpaired."

"9. That the renewing grace of God is *special* (in distinction from that which is common, and is resisted by the sinful mind) inasmuch as it is that which is designed to secure, and does infallibly secure, the conversion of the sinner.

"10. That all who are renewed by the Holy Spirit are elected or chosen of God from eternity, that they should be holy, not on account of foreseen faith or good works, but according to the good pleasure of his will.

"11. That all who are renewed by the Holy Spirit will, through his continued influence, persevere in holiness to the end, and obtain eternal life.

"Such is my faith in respect to some of the leading doctrines of the gospel. These doctrines I preach; these

doctrines I teach in the theological department of this seminary; these I have repeatedly published to the world. With what truth or justice any regard me as a 'teacher of theology introducing heresy into our churches,' the candid can judge.

"But it may be asked whether, after all, there are not some points on which I differ from my brethren generally, or, at least, from some of them? I answer, It would be strange if any two men should be found to agree exactly in all the minute matters of religious opinion. With respect, however, to what is properly considered the orthodox or Calvinistic SYSTEM of doctrines, as including the great FACTS of Christianity, and as opposed to, and distinguished from, the Unitarian, Pelagian, and Arminian systems, I suppose there is between the orthodox ministry and myself an entire agreement."—*Christian Spectator*, Vol. iv, No. 1.

Such, then, are the sentiments of Dr. Taylor, who is supposed by many to be irrecoverably gone from Calvinism.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

SOME of the prominent writers of the New School party in the Calvinistic Churches, carry their Calvinism so far as to involve in doubt the doctrine that all who die in infancy are saved.

In an editorial article which appeared in the New-York Evangelist, when edited by the Rev. Joshua Leavitt—a paper which had its origin under the auspices of New Divinity, and has been devoted to its interests ever since, may be found the following sentiments:—

“As the Holy Ghost has not seen fit to give us definite instructions on these points, and there seems to be nothing which we can do for such little ones, to fit them for heaven, would any thing be lost to the cause of practical piety, if we should all consent to leave the whole case of dying infants to the wisdom and benevolence of Him who says, ‘The secret things belong unto the Lord our God?’”

Would an intelligent writer, who firmly believes in the salvation of all who die in infancy, express himself thus? Would he place the *whole case* of dying infants among the secret things belonging to God, and with reference to which the Holy Ghost has not seen fit to give us definite instructions, and suggest that there is nothing gained to the cause of practical piety by discussing the subject? This is not the language of Arminianism.

The Rev. Dr. Cox assumes the same ground. In his work on Quakerism he remarks:—

“There are questions and facts unresolved on this article of the ‘common faith,’ which embarrass really, if not equally, every theory that was ever soberly framed for its elucidation. Such as these,—Have idiots souls? What becomes of them?—and monsters, what of them?—and so of millions of unborn children, of dead-born, of destroyed embryos, &c.? Were all these represented in Adam? How are they related to him—how to Christ? Where there is no evidence, we had better have no theory. The Scripture is often eloquent in its omissions. If, for example, it had affirmed the salvation of *all* infants, or any class of them, under a certain age, the consequences had been terrible! What fears for those who should die ever so little past that age! What temptations to infanticide under it, especially to *guilty* parents! What vain repinings and murmurings among some, that they did not die earlier! How were the value of life cheapened, and a due preparation for death obstructed and postponed!

These difficulties are not properly the *opprobria theologiæ*, they are ‘the secret things which belong to God.’”—p. 669.

It is clearly the doctrine of this passage, that we have no more information respecting the fate of dying infants, than on the questions, Have idiots souls? what becomes of monsters? &c.; that this is one of the eloquent omissions of Scripture; that we have *no* information on this subject, and therefore had better have no theory; that this is one of the secret things which belong to God. It is argued that if the Scriptures had affirmed the salvation of *all* infants, or *any class* of them, under a certain age, it would have led to terrible consequences—to fears for those who might die ever so little past that age—to vain repinings among some, that they did not die earlier—to a cheapening of the value of human life and the postponement of the preparation for death—and, finally, to strong temptations to infanticide.

Mr. Duffield adverts to this subject in the work to which we have so often referred. His language is characterized by great caution, but yet sufficiently indicates the position he occupies. In the chapter on the “Moral Condition of Deceased Infants,” he remarks,—

“The death of the infant is no more proof of its final condemnation, than the death of the believer. On the contrary, as the infant has neither done good nor evil, the presumption arising from its death would rather seem to be, that inasmuch as its powers, if it had remained in this world, would have been developed in sin, so its removal to another and essentially different world—where all its modes of acquiring knowledge, and also of acting, will be essentially different—will most probably conduce to instantaneous and lofty exhibitions of holiness.

“It is true, that the presumption may be applied the other way. Inasmuch as God visits on the infant the sin of Adam—subjecting it to disease and death, and placing

it in a world, and under the operation of laws which operate with certainty to secure its voluntary sinning, as soon as capable of moral agency ; and inasmuch as one of the consequences of such rebellion against God is, that a change will take place, either sooner or later, in the outward circumstances and relations of men in this world, by virtue of which much more rapid and frightful developments of iniquity shall be made—why may we not conclude that, in the exercise of his sovereignty, God sees fit to *anticipate* such things, and transfer one and another, forthwith as they come into this world, to a new scene of existence, where the full and final results of Adam's apostacy are displayed ? Especially so, it might be added, since the promise of grace, in the covenant, seems to contemplate none other than the children of believers. 'I will be a God to thee, and to *thy* seed after thee ;' and since there can be no more inconsistency with divine justice to place an infant in circumstances where it will become a sinner *sooner* than *later*, provided there is not to place it in such circumstances at all. We confess, therefore, that nothing ought to be rashly and positively asserted on this subject either way.

"It would seem as if God had not seen it proper to give us any decisive information on this subject ; and we can see great wisdom and goodness too, in his keeping us in absolute ignorance on this point. Were the former presumption an established truth, and reverently received among men, there is no knowing what mischievous consequences might result from it, nor how far men, to render their darling babes eternally happy, might be tempted to become the murderers of their own offspring. And were the latter an established truth, with what heart-rending agony would every sensitive soul see the infant consigned to the tomb. It is well that Providence has thrown an impenetrable veil over this thing. Yet, if we may be

allowed to indulge a fond conjecture, the presumption seems strongest that the death of the infant is a procedure of mercy, rather than of vindictive justice. For, as the great rule of procedure on the judgment day shall be, that God ‘will render unto *every one* according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil,’ the righteous and the wicked shall receive their award and allotment upon a principle which it is manifest, in the nature of things, cannot be adopted with regard to those dying in infancy.”—p. 351.

The import of this passage is obvious, notwithstanding the cloudy verbiage in which some of its awful arguments are clothed. It assumes that God has not seen fit to give us *any* decisive information on this subject—that he has thrown an *impenetrable veil* over it—that he has kept us in *absolute ignorance* on this point—that he has manifested great wisdom and goodness in this procedure—and that it would be rash in us to assert any thing on this subject, positively, either way. It contains several presumptions in favour of the supposition that some infants are damned. Mr. D. cannot see, if God may subject the infant to disease and death, and place it in a world where it will commit sin, and may become a very wicked man or woman, and from which it may pass into the state and place of final punishment, why, in the exercise of his sovereignty, he may not also “anticipate such things” by transferring children to hell “forthwith,” as soon “as they come into the world.” There is also a presumption to this effect, in the estimation of Mr. D., arising from the well-known doctrine, held by many, if not all Calvinists, that “the promise of grace, in the covenant, seems to contemplate none other than the children of believers.” He further concludes, that if there be no inconsistency with divine justice in placing an infant in *this* world, in which it will become a sinner, there can be none in placing it *sooner*

than *later* in *another* world, where it will be a sinner. The rest you must imagine.

He argues against the supposition that all infants, dying in infancy, are saved. If it were "an established truth, and reverently believed, there is no knowing what mischievous consequences might result from it, nor how far men, to render their darling babes eternally happy, might be tempted to become the murderers of their own offspring." It is true he finds presumptions on the other side of the question—but they are feeble and indefinite. As the infant has done neither good nor evil, and as, in death, it is removed to "another and essentially different world," the circumstances amid which it is placed "will most probably conduce to instantaneous and lofty exhibitions of holiness." He is not sure that this will be the case, but thinks it probable. And indeed any one must perceive that this will depend very much on the character of the world to which it is removed, which is the very thing to be ascertained, and about which there is so much uncertainty. Again: if he "may be allowed to indulge a fond conjecture, the presumption seems strongest that the death of the infant is a procedure of mercy rather than of vindictive justice." What he means by a *procedure of mercy*, we are not certain. He may mean, for all that we can see, that as none but the children of believers are included in the covenant of mercy, and as God can, as consistently with justice, send non-elect infants to hell, as bring them into this world, keep them here until they become adult sinners, and then consign them to that destiny; that to cut them off and damn them in infancy would be *merciful* rather than *vindictive*, inasmuch as their living longer would only increase their responsibility, guilt, and misery. But if we give these terms the most favourable construction, still he only indulges a *fond conjecture* on this point—a *fond conjecture* that the *presumption* on

the side of mercy *seems* the strongest. Nor is there any thing definite to be gathered from the suggestion, that the principle on which the righteous and the wicked will receive their award, cannot be applied to infants, since there are very strong presumptions in Mr. D.'s mind, of the existence of *some* principle on which they may be damned.

Mr. Barnes, in a note to his sermon on "The Way of Salvation," disavows the doctrine of the damnation of infants, not only in behalf of himself, but also of the whole "Presbyterian Church in this country," and of "Calvinists of the present day." "It is admitted," he says, "with regret, that it has been held, by a few, that infants *may be* lost. This must be conceded in regard to Dr. Gill, Dr. Twisse, and a few others." He also denies that the doctrine ever "had any essential connection with Calvinism." "It grew," he says, "out of the doctrine of imputation of Adam's sin, or our *acting in him*—a sentiment as fully held, in principle, by Arminians, as it ever was by their opponents." He says that "an assertion that such an opinion *is* held—that it is maintained that 'there are infants in hell not a span long,' unless the cases where it has been done are distinctly and specifically referred to, in the language of the law is slander."

We have no disposition to dispute about the length of the infants whose fate we are discussing, and certainly as little desire to be prosecuted for slander; but we have made up our mind to run the awful risk of disputing the correctness of some of Mr. B.'s positions. We affirm that the doctrine has an essential connection with Calvinism. It results by the plainest process of deduction, not only from the entire system, but from several of its leading doctrines taken separately.

Take, first, the Calvinistic doctrine of election, as stated in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of Mr.

B.'s Church, and as asserted by himself in his notes on Romans ix. If God has elected to eternal salvation a definite number of individuals—if these were elected before they were born—before the foundation of the world—even from eternity—if all these will be infallibly saved, and none others—what is the most obvious inference respecting the future condition of those infants dying in infancy, who are not included among the elect? There can be but one answer, and that is—*that they are lost*. The inference is strengthened, if it be possible to add to its strength, by the provision which Mr. B.'s creed makes for the salvation of elect infants. "Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word." This provision is made for elect infants in view of the existence of two classes, and in contradistinction to those who are non-elect. But if it is made for them, and them alone, what is to become of the other class? Will they be saved without regeneration "by Christ through the Spirit?" This will not answer. It is curious to observe how Mr. B. attempts to make it appear that the language of the Confession of Faith respecting elect infants does not imply that others may be lost. This inference, he says, "cannot be sustained. The authors of the Confession, *like the sacred writers*, were in the habit of calling all those who were saved, 'the elect.' They spoke of infants saved, as a part of the elect—a part of the race chosen to salvation. They affirm not that *any* are lost; nor can it be proved that they meant to imply it." It is not necessary to our argument to maintain that they *affirm* positively that any are lost, or to decide what they *meant* to imply. The question at present is simply, What is the logical inference from what they do assert?

We affirm it to be that non-elect infants, dying in infancy, are *not* regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit. Mr. B. denies that any such inference follows. He says that the framers of the Confession were merely classing *saved infants* among the elect. But this mode of stating the case does not relieve the difficulty. For if some are elected to salvation, while others are not—and we are gravely informed that all infants *saved* are of the elect—what is the obvious inference respecting non-elect infants? They must be classed with the unsaved. The distinction between *saved* and *unsaved* infants is as clearly recognised by Mr. B. as the distinction between *elect* and *non-elect* infants. Thus his explanation leads directly to the result which it was intended to obviate. The fact that he resorted to such an explanation shows that he felt himself to be in great difficulty; for any person of ordinary intelligence can perceive, at one glance, that the authors of the Confession were not merely representing infants saved as a part of the elect. They were stating by *what means* elect infants are regenerated and saved; and they do it in such a way as to restrict the application of the specified means to those who are elect. Our inference is sustained also by direct assertion in another part of the same creed, where it is said, that “as God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained *all the means* thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are *redeemed by Christ*, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season; are *justified, adopted, sanctified*, and kept by his power, through faith unto salvation. *Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.*”

It will not do for Calvinists to say that all infants are elect; for then, according to their scheme, all adults would

be elect, and universal salvation would be the result. Nor is this inconsistency chargeable on Mr. B. He gives us his views of the application of the doctrine of election to infants in his Notes on the Epistle to the Romans. On the words of the apostle, "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called," ix, 7, he remarks, "*Shall thy seed, &c.*—Thy true people. This implied a selection, or choice; and, therefore, the doctrine of *election* was illustrated in the very commencement of the history of the nation; and as God had *then* made such a distinction, he might still do it. As he had then rejected a part of the natural descendants of Abraham, so he might still do it. This is the argument the apostle is pursuing." And on the words which occur in the next verse, "but the children of the promise are counted for the seed," he remarks, "*Are counted*—Are regarded, or reckoned. God reckons things as they are; and therefore designed that they should be his true children. *As the seed*—The spiritual children of God; the partakers of his mercy and salvation. This refers, doubtless, to spiritual privileges and to salvation; and therefore has relation, not to nations as such, but to individuals." And on verses 10 and 11, which relate to the immediate posterity of Isaac and Rebecca, he says, "Not only is the *principle* of making a distinction among the natural descendants of Abraham thus settled by the promise, but it is still further seen and illustrated in the birth of the two sons of Isaac. He had shown that the principle of thus making a distinction among the posterity of Abraham was recognised in the original promise, thus proving that *all* the descendants of Abraham were of course to be saved; and he now proceeds to show that the principle was recognised in the case of his posterity in the family of Isaac. And he shows that it is not according to any natural principles that the selection was made; that

he not only made a distinction between Jacob and Esau, but that he did it according to his good pleasure, choosing the younger to be the object of his favour, and rejecting the elder, who, according to the custom of the times, was supposed to be entitled to peculiar honour and rights. And in order to prove that this was done according to his own good pleasure, he shows that the distinction was made before they were born ; before they had formed any character ; and, consequently, in such a way that it could not be pretended that it was in consequence of any works they had performed."

In these quotations it is maintained by Mr. B. that God made a distinction among the immediate descendants of Abraham, electing one of his sons and his posterity, and rejecting the other and his posterity ; that the same distinction was made in the family of Isaac between Jacob and Esau, "choosing the younger to be the object of his favour, and rejecting the elder;" that this was done according to the good pleasure of God, which is proved by the fact that he made this distinction between them "before they were born ; before they had formed any character ; and, consequently, in such a way that it could not be pretended that it was in consequence of any works which they had performed ;" that the election and rejection "refer, doubtless, to spiritual privileges and salvation," and have relation "to individuals ;" and that those elected are chosen to be "the spiritual children of God, the partakers of his mercy and salvation ;" and, further, that as God has made this distinction in times that are past, he may "still do it."

We now ask, what must have become of those children who were not chosen to spiritual privileges and salvation, but rejected, had they died in infancy ? Would they have been saved ? Certainly not ; for that would have destroyed the distinction between them and the others. It would have

proved that they, too, were chosen to salvation. The inference is inevitable that they must have been lost.

The only way that remains of avoiding this troublesome inference is, by adopting the hypothesis that none but elect infants die in infancy. Whether Mr. B. intends to take refuge in this or not, we cannot positively affirm ; but his language strongly implies it. In the first place, he admits, with regret, that a few have held the doctrine that infants *may* be lost. Of course *he* does not hold that doctrine. In the second place, he considers all saved infants as belonging to the elect. If, then, no infants die in infancy but what are saved, and all saved infants are of the elect, it follows, incontestably, that none but elect children die in infancy. But the mind that can seriously entertain such a supposition must have a predilection for absurdity. It must be prepared to believe, that while infants are divided into two classes, elect and non-elect, of all the infants that have died of ordinary sickness, of epidemics, or by accident, or war, or famine, or pestilence, every non-elect infant has escaped, and those of the elect alone have fallen ; that when the cruel edict of Herod caused the blood of infants to be poured out like water, and when that of Pharaoh consigned them by thousands to the monsters of the Nile, not one single victim was taken from among the reprobates—still the slain were all God's elect ; that when the judgments of God are abroad, he extends the mysterious protection of his providence, not to those who are destined to be regenerated and saved, and become the salt of the earth, but to those who are to remain impenitent and rebellious ; that in the whole antediluvian world that perished by the flood, there was not one non-elect infant, or if there were, it was in the family of Noah, and was carefully preserved, while the elect were drowned ; that if God had suspended this judgment for a while, he would have had no reason to complain that all

flesh had corrupted its way, as there would have been a generation of his own chosen people, equal in number to all the infants that perished by the deluge ; that there was not a single non-elect infant in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah when those cities were destroyed, but that every infant consumed by that fearful conflagration was of the elect. If this supposition be true, it may be made a question, whether, in the case of non-elect infants, "the flesh will quiver where the pincers tear," or "the blood follow where the knife is driven." But it is needless to enlarge on this point.

The doctrine of the damnation of infants results, inevitably, from the doctrine that Christ did not make an atonement for all. If all who are saved are saved on the ground of atonement, those for whom Christ has not died must be lost. This conclusion applies equally to children and adults.

Precisely the same conclusion follows the doctrine which extends the atonement to all, but limits its application to a part. This is Mr. B.'s theory. The application of the atonement is supposed to be necessary to salvation, but this is confined to the elect by the divine decree. Of course, all to whom the atonement is not applied must be lost, whether infants or adults.

This blood-freezing tenet is also deducible from the very popular doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints," as held by Calvinists. According to this doctrine, if any are finally lost, it is because they were never in grace—never in the favour of God—never within the limits of that kingdom, the subjects of which are heirs of salvation. For had they ever been in this condition, they would have been saved infallibly. It follows, then, that if any are damned at mature age, they were not in the favour of God while infants. If they were, they must have so continued while adults, and so have been saved. What, then, must have been the fate of those who are lost, had they died in

infancy? Must they not have been lost? Take the case of the "rich man," spoken of in the gospels, for example. It is declared by the Saviour that "in hell he lifted up his eyes." Now it is undeniable, according to the Calvinistic doctrine of final perseverance, that this man was never in the favour of God—that he never, not even while he was an infant, stood in that relation to God which would have secured to him eternal life, supposing him to have died in that condition, otherwise he must have continued in that condition, and so have been finally saved. What then must have become of the rich man had he died in infancy? The question admits of but one answer.

Perhaps an attempt may be made to evade the force of this reasoning, by affirming that all infants are in the favour of God, and therefore safe, dying in infancy. This is, indeed, the very truth. But suppose the doctrine of final perseverance, as held by Calvinists, to be true, and it will follow, indubitably, that all adults are in the favour of God, since all adults, except Adam and Eve, were once infants. Thus we are fairly landed on the shores of Universalism. The only way to escape Universalism on the one hand, or the damnation of infants on the other, is to abandon this doctrine of "infallible perseverance."

It may possibly be suggested that the arrangement which secures the infallible perseverance of the saints does not take effect until conversion, and that, although the infant is in the favour of God, it may lose that advantage by personal transgression, as soon as it arrives at the period of moral accountability. It would seem, then, that men and women may fall into sin after their conversion—may deny their Lord, and commit the sin of adultery, and idolatry, like Peter, and David, and Solomon, and yet remain in a state of security, while the poor child falls under the condemnation of the law of God, and is exposed to hell for the first childish transgression. Can any one

believe that God administers the plan of salvation on principles so very discordant, and so grossly partial to the grown-up sinner? Besides, such a subterfuge would be in direct denial of "the immutability of the decree of election," which applies equally to infants and adults, and on which, the Confession says, the "perseverance of the saints depends." It would be destructive of the entire system of Calvinism.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

THE doctrine which excludes from the covenant of grace a portion of mankind, leads directly to the inference that infants may be lost. This doctrine is advanced by Mr. Duffield in the following passage, as furnishing a presumption on the side of the damnation of infants. "Especially so, it might be added, since the promise of grace, in the covenant, seems to contemplate none other than the children of believers, 'I will be a God to thee, and to *thy* seed after thee.'" Now, if no human being can be saved but by the covenant of grace, and that covenant includes a particular class of mankind, and "none other," the damnation of the rest is inevitable, whether they die in infancy or old age; and the appalling presumption of Mr. D. is amply sustained.

Although it is essential to Calvinism thus to limit the subjects of covenant mercy, it is not essential to it to include all the children of believers in the covenant, or confine its advantages to them. The system would be unimpaired by the supposition, that God elects the subjects of salvation from among the children both of believers and

unbelievers, and rejects others on the same principle. The doctrine that all the children of believers, and none other, are included in the covenant of grace, probably had its origin in the emergencies which have grown out of parental sensibility. It will be found a hard task to reconcile a religious community to a system of doctrine which spreads so gloomy an uncertainty over the destiny of their deceased little ones. But that difficulty is opportunely removed by the assurance, that the children of believers are all safe. Let them be convinced of this, and they will, probably, not only be reconciled to the system, but feel a strong attachment to it. The Rev. Dr. Miller, of Princeton, in an essay on infant baptism, founds an argument in favour of "the church membership of the infant seed of believers" on parental sympathy. "*The close and endearing connection between parents and children,*" he says, "affords a strong argument in its favour. The voice of nature is lifted up, and pleads most powerfully in behalf of our cause. The thought of severing parents from their offspring, in regard to the most interesting relations in which it has pleased God in his adorable providence to place them, is equally repugnant to Christian feeling and natural law. Can it be, my friends, that when the stem is in the Church the branch is out of it? Can it be that when the parent is within the visible kingdom of the Redeemer, his offspring, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, have no connection with it? It is not so in any other society that the great moral Governor of the world ever formed. It is not so in civil society. Children are born citizens of the state in which the parents resided at the time of their birth. In virtue of their birth they are plenary citizens, bound by all the duties, and entitled to all the privileges of that relation, whenever they become capable of exercising them. From these duties they cannot be liberated—of these privileges they cannot be deprived,

but by the commission of crime. But why should this principle be set aside in the Church of God? Surely it is not less obvious or less powerful in grace than in nature."

—*Presbyterian Tracts*, vol. i.

The effect of this reasoning is to extend a saving interest in the covenant of mercy to all the children of believers. For what are church membership, and baptism, if eternally separated from the spiritual blessings necessary to salvation? Surely, if the thought of excluding "the infant seed of believers" from these outward privileges would be so revolting to "natural law" and "Christian feeling," it would be much more so to suppose them excluded from salvation, and thus severed from their parents. And this is what the author intends. He tells us that the covenant "had a respect to spiritual as well as temporal blessings."

This comfortable notion, however, when connected with the system of Calvinism, leads to endless perplexities and contradictions; for, if all who are entitled to the spiritual blessings of the new covenant are elect, and must continue in that relation, it will follow that the whole posterity of the first faithful parents must be saved. Noah was a righteous man; all his children are therefore safe; and consequently all *their* children; and, inasmuch as the whole post-diluvian population descended from him, every one who has lived since the flood is safe. Moreover, we have only to suppose that Adam and Eve were at any time the true children of God, and all the world is safe.

Thus we see that this consolatory provision destroys Calvinism, by running it into Universalism. Nor is this result avoided by the restricting clause; since to restrict the great and saving benefits of the covenant to the children of believers, is, in effect, nothing more nor less than to restrict them to every descendant of Adam.

We have been led to think that these difficulties have not wholly escaped the observation of the advocates of

this doctrine. On reading a work entitled "Household Consecration," by Rev. N. E. Johnson, (a work evidently based on this principle, and which, besides its inconsistencies, contains many excellences, and is, on the whole, highly creditable to the heart and the intellect of its author,) we observe that, in tracing the principle, both before and after the flood, he very wisely waits until there are several distinct families in existence before he brings it into operation, and in this way he obtains the distinction of "pious and impious families."

The heterogeneousness of this doctrine, with the system in which it is incorporated, is illustrated by a passage in Barnes' Notes on Romans. The doctrine is supposed to be inculcated by the terms of the covenant which God made with Abraham: "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." But we find Calvinism making a distinction in this particular among the immediate descendants of Abraham. On Rom. ix, 7: "Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children," &c., Mr. B. remarks, "This implies a selection or choice: and therefore the doctrine of *election* was illustrated in the very commencement of the nation," &c. Thus the doctrine is fairly exploded: Abraham had but two children, one of which was included in, and the other excluded from the covenant. But Mr. B. is not at all daunted by this aspect of affairs. He considers the doctrine established, rather than endangered by this distinction. On verse 10, he remarks, "He had shown that the principle of thus making a distinction among the posterity of Abraham was recognised in the original promise; thus proving that *all* the descendants of Abraham *were of course to be saved.*" Now, then, we suppose that this principle will have fair play, and be subject to no more interruptions. Is it so? Will all the descendants of Abraham in the line of Isaac be saved as a matter of course? So Mr. B. explicitly de-

clares. But the genius of Calvinism suddenly appears with frowning brow—Mr. B. recognises his approach, pays his profoundest homage to the awful apparition, and consents that a distinction shall be made among the descendants of Abraham, in the very next generation—that Jacob shall be chosen, and Esau rejected; and that such distinctions in families shall be made throughout all future generations. The grim visitant relaxes his frown, smiles horrible satisfaction at the sacrifice, and retires. Mr. B. must not, however, expect quite so submissive a deference to his reasonings on the part of Arminians, when he still insists that these distinctions among the descendants of Abraham are not only *consistent* with the salvation of all his posterity, but *prove* that they were all “of course to be saved.”

The believers of Calvinism must, therefore, to be consistent, choose between the alternatives of adopting Universalism, or giving up the doctrine that all the children of believers are included in the covenant of election; and acknowledge that their children are as liable to be excluded from that covenant, and consequently from salvation, as those of ungodly parents. Indeed, it is truly remarkable that they should claim the benefit of such an arrangement for themselves, and deny it to poor Isaac and Rebecca; one of whose twin children, they tell us, was elected to eternal salvation before it was born, and the other passed by, and left to live in sin and be destroyed. The argument of Dr. Miller: “Can it be, my friends, that when the stem is in the Church, the branch is out of it?” is considered of no avail here. The elect must therefore be content with their own election, and not claim the same advantage for all their children.

The reader will be able to perceive by this time with how much reason Mr. B. so earnestly asserts that the doctrine that infants may be lost, has no essential connection

with Calvinism. He refers it to "the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, or our acting in him," as its source. This "sentiment," he says, "is as fully held in principle by Arminians as it ever was by their opponents." He thus attempts to involve Arminians in the same difficulty with himself. But this representation is grossly sophistical. The difference between Arminianism and Calvinism at this point is vast and essential. There is a great gulf between them ; for whatever views Arminians may entertain respecting the condition in which Adam's offence placed his posterity, they maintain that the principles and provisions of the mediatorial economy place all infants within the precincts of the kingdom of grace, and, therefore, in a condition of perfect security while infants. This condition, they believe, may be subsequently forfeited by voluntary transgression. They deny the Calvinistic view of election to eternal life, and hold that the election proceeds on principles very different from those alleged by Calvinists. Besides, it is not the doctrine of imputation simply, however far it may be carried, which endangers the salvation of infants. For the most rigid Calvinists hold that the elect are secure, notwithstanding this imputation. It is the limitation of the redeeming covenant and its spiritual blessings—the doctrine of the election of a definite number to these privileges, exclusive of the rest, which creates all the difficulty. It is not the fact that all are diseased, which renders the death of some inevitable, but the restricted application of the remedy. Nor does Mr. B. escape the difficulty by rejecting the doctrine of imputation. His theory places all mankind in precisely the same condition, so far as their prospect of salvation is concerned, although by another process. He holds, as we have shown, to the election of a definite number to eternal life—that mankind are distinguished as elect and non-elect before they are born, and, therefore, while

they are infants. He justifies God in choosing to salvation a "definite number," by representing all as "justly condemned," and argues that God has therefore a "right to save whom he pleases." He illustrates his argument by saying, "The executive of a country may select any number of criminals whom he may see fit to pardon, or who may be forgiven, in consistency with the supremacy of the laws, and the welfare of the community, and none has a right to murmur, but every good citizen should rejoice that *any* may be pardoned with safety."—*Notes on Rom. ix, 15.*

Mr. B. holds to what may be called, for distinction's sake, the *constitution theory*. In a review of "The Case of Mr. Barnes," in the Christian Spectator for June, 1831, adverting to the doctrine of the Confession of Faith, the reviewer says, "In this scheme it is of course implied that the evils which came on the posterity, came in *the way*, or in *the mode* of a strictly legal process; that the evils were *the legal penalty due to sin*, and as such were inflicted on the ground that the first sin of Adam was in *its ill desert* the sin of all his posterity." He then goes on to repudiate this doctrine, and give what he considers the truth on the subject. "Now this *mode* of consequence, the New-England divines, for more than sixty years, have generally denied, and strenuously opposed; and maintained simply, in respect to *the mode*, that if Adam sinned, *all his posterity, according to God's sovereign constitution, would be subject to sin and death*. By the sovereignty of God here spoken of, these divines have not intended that God ordained things thus without good and sufficient reasons; or that none of these reasons are within the limits of human conjecture. But they maintain that God has not seen proper to reveal those reasons, and of course that we are not authorized to assert that those evils came on Adam's posterity in execution of a legal sentence, or in the way of retributive justice for their ill desert."—p. 298.

The difference, then, between these two classes of theorists is this—they both hold that the posterity of Adam, in consequence of sin, are “subjected to sin and death;” but one class assigns, as a reason for the infliction of these evils, that the posterity of Adam partook of the ill desert of his sin, or that the guilt of it was imputed to them, and that the evils were, therefore, inflicted as a punishment; while the other maintains that these evils came on the posterity of Adam as a consequence of his sin, by a “divine constitution or appointment,” but that God has not seen fit to reveal his reasons for the adoption of this constitution. They do not, therefore, feel authorized to adopt the *imputation theory* as furnishing the explanation. It seems to be the object of the reviewer to prove that both parties come to the same result, both as to the *condition* of Adam’s posterity, and the fact that they come into that condition in *consequence of the sin of Adam*. He concludes, finally, that the dispute is “solely a dispute about words.”

The policy of Mr. B., in thus referring the offensive tenet to a doctrine with which it has no necessary connection, was probably to divert attention from those doctrines to which it necessarily adheres; and likewise secure to himself the advantage of including in his denial both the tenet in question and the theory in which he says it had its origin.

Mr. B. may possibly expect to escape the doctrine that non-elect infants are sent to hell, by arguing, that as “infants have no moral character” they are not subjects of punishment or reward, and therefore cannot be consigned to that place. But he would be met at this point by another difficulty. The fact of their having “no moral character” would as certainly exclude them from heaven as from hell. There would be this bar to their reception there, in addition to the circumstance of their not being elected to salvation. And, still worse, this doctrine would

exclude elect infants from heaven as certainly as the non-elect; for none can enter heaven without a moral character. From that place all but the holy are excluded. So that some other place or places than heaven and hell must be found for both classes, or they must be annihilated, which Mr. Finney says might be done without injustice.

It is impossible to give Calvinism any modification which does not involve a denial of the salvation of all who die in infancy.

Mr. B. very confidently asserts "that in no Presbyterian church in this country is it maintained to be a fact, that infants are actually damned." In answer to this, supposing him to be correctly informed, it might be remarked, that to hold a doctrine, and to maintain it, or announce it publicly, are not the same thing at the present day. There may be some who hold it, and yet lay it aside among their "sectarian peculiarities," and consider it a very "unprofitable part of popular instruction." Whether this be the case or not, we frequently meet with expressions in our reading which not only involve, as a logical consequence, the insecurity of some who die in infancy, but indicate very strikingly that the mind of the writer is far from being assured that all who die in infancy are saved. In a pamphlet on "Native Depravity," by the Rev. Gardiner Spring, pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in the city of New-York, may be found the following language :—

"The sentiment has often been imputed to the advocates of native depravity, that they *do not believe in the salvation of infants*. But nothing is *more false or unjust* than this imputation. That the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, rescues all infants from perdition, I do not deny, but fondly hope; that it rescues untold millions I have not a doubt. *Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings* hast thou

perfected praise. Children are the heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. But while we say this, we also say that God is not bound in *justice* to save them ; and that whether he saves a whole or a part, he saves them as a matter of mere mercy, through the blood of his Son.”—p. 52.

Let us consider this singular passage. It professes to resent, as very false and unjust, the imputation that “the advocates of native depravity do not believe in the salvation of infants.” But it is not the case, that this is imputed to the advocates of native depravity, as such, for the Methodists hold to native depravity, and yet who imputes to them the belief that infants are not saved ? It is imputed to Calvinists, not because they believe in native depravity, but because they believe in the election of a certain number to eternal life, before they were born, to the exclusion of the rest. Besides, no one imputes to them that they do not believe in the salvation of *any* but that they do not believe in the salvation of *all* infants. Dr. S., however, represents the imputation as being *that they do not believe in the salvation of infants* ; so that he misrepresents a little in making out the charge of misrepresentation against others. He can easily pronounce such an imputation *false and unjust*, without committing himself to the support of the doctrine that *all* who die in infancy are safe. We must, however, accord to him the credit of having fabricated the imputation for the purpose of contradicting it ; and at the same time *seeming* to contradict the imputation which is actually urged against them. But mark how he treats the supposition that the grace of God rescues *all infants* from perdition. He does *not deny* it, but *fondly hopes* that it is the case. This, then, is the amount of his confidence when the proposition includes *all* infants. When it includes a *part* only, see how he brightens up ! That the grace of God *rescues untold*

millions he has *not a doubt*. But how is it, that with respect to the salvation of some infants, he merely declines a denial, and but fondly hopes, while with respect to the case of others he has the fullest assurance? Why does he not entertain the same delightful confidence respecting all infants? His theory will solve these questions. Some of those infants are elect, and others are not. And lest his readers should be misled by his fond hopes in behalf of the non-elect, he notifies them that, whether God saves the whole or a part, he is not bound in *justice* to save them; which implies that he might damn them without injustice. If Dr. S. does not believe in the damnation of some infants, he certainly walks very near the boundary which divides a full belief in this doctrine from uncertainty respecting it; and we are quite inclined to think that we might impute to him that he does not *confidently* believe in the salvation of *all* infants, without either falsehood or injustice. But we have not done with this subject.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

MR. BARNES admits, though with regret, that a few have held the doctrine that infants may be lost. He mentions Dr. Gill and Dr. Twisse as of this number. He might with equal propriety have mentioned Calvin in this connection, after whom his favourite system is named. Perhaps it was more in accordance with his feelings of regret to throw him among the "few others." The following passage is sufficient to declare Calvin's opinion on the subject:—"How came it to pass that the fall of Adam, independent of any remedy, should involve so many nations,

with their infant children, in eternal death? But such was the will of God!! It was a *horrible decree*, I confess; but no one can deny that God foreknew the future state of man before he created him; *and that he did foreknow it, because it was appointed by his own decree.*—*Calvin's Institutes*, b. iii, chap. xxiii, sect. 6.

There is, also, an avowal of this horrible doctrine in a recent number of the New-York Observer, no less explicit than that which we have just recorded.

A writer in the "Christian Review" advanced the following argument on the subject of war:—

"Look at an army in the hour of battle. See attacks and retreats, battalions annihilated, commanders falling, shouts of onset, groans of death, horses trampling the fallen, limbs flying in the air, suffocating smoke, thundering artillery, thousands smarting in the agony of death, and none to administer a cup of water. Do the precepts of Christianity authorize such a scene? Would such an exhibition ever grow out of its legitimate effects?"

To this the editor of the Observer replied:—"A scene far more awful than this is certainly authorized by Christianity, and will 'grow out of its legitimate effects;' a scene which will call to suffering, not only the hardy soldier, but human beings of *every age*, sex, and condition—male and female, the lame, the sick, the blind, the deaf, the aged, and the infant. Even the grave shall be no hiding place from its demands. The dust shall be gathered up, and the mummy reanimated, and the power of feeling pain shall be restored to them. And they shall be swept off, millions on millions, into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone, where their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, but the smoke of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever. And no one engaged in bringing this to pass will shrink from this task, but all will perform their appointed parts with alacrity, and shout over

the sight of this vast destruction, Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth ! Neither, while thus engaged, will they be impelled by any sinful passion, nor will any unholy thought or feeling have place in their hearts ; but they will be filled with the very spirit of their most kind and merciful Master, and be guided in every act by the mind which was also in him.

“ That Christianity sanctions, and will bring on such a scene as this, the reviewer, we doubt not, most fully believes. Why, then, should he think that Christianity, from its very nature, cannot sanction the infliction of the sufferings which he describes on those who come upon us for the purpose of devastation and murder, and can be restrained in no other way from accomplishing their horrid object ? ” — *New-York Observer*, Sept. 15, 1838.

The editors of the *Christian Advocate and Journal* called attention to this open declaration of a doctrine, which, we are told, no Calvinists of the present day hold or maintain. The editor of the *Observer* saw that he had committed himself, and made an effort to extricate himself from his unhappy position. But how ? He could not deny that he had affirmed the damnation of *infants*. He had not only included in the destruction “ human beings of every age,” but specified “ the infant,” placing it in contrast with “ the aged.” Nor could he deny that the “ suffering ” predicated was *damnation*. For he had said that the grave should be “ no hiding place ” from it, whereas the grave is a hiding place from suffering to all who are saved. He had said, moreover, that they should “ be swept off, millions on millions, into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone,” &c. He does not pretend to deny that he had asserted the *damnation of infants*. In what way, then, does he attempt to work out his deliverance ? By preposterously trifling with the meaning of the term *infant*. But the entire reply of the *Observer* is

worthy of a permanent record, as belonging to the history of this controversy.

“ Damnation of infants.”—The editor of the Christian Advocate thinks we have avowed an uncomfortable doctrine on this subject; but very possibly he holds the same doctrine as much as we do. What does he understand by the word ‘infant?’ Webster defines it, ‘the first period of life, beginning at birth,’—not telling us when it ends. He adds that, in law, infancy extends to the age of twenty-one. Some writers make infancy extend to the age of seven, childhood from seven to fourteen, &c. Theologians scold or speculate about ‘infant damnation,’ but do not stop to think whether they have any meaning in particular or not; and generally they have none, except that those on the other side are awful heretics. If the editor of the Advocate will define the term, and then consider the question, perhaps he will agree with us; and perhaps we shall amend our phraseology.”—*N. Y. Observer*, Oct. 26, 1838.

It is clearly apparent to us, whatever impression may be made on the minds of others, by the answer, that he has no notion of giving up the doctrine asserted. On the contrary, he intimates, that if the editor of the Advocate will define the term “infant,” and then consider the question,—if he will only make his definition wide enough to include the ages of which moral accountability may be undeniably predicated—if, for instance, he will adopt the definition which extends infancy to twenty-one years of age, “possibly,” and “perhaps,” he will hold the same doctrine, and agree with the editor of the Observer. So that the agreement is to be brought about, not by a denial of this doctrine on the part of the Observer, but by an admission of it on the part of the Advocate.

If the editors of the Christian Advocate and Journal, and those for whom they write, held the doctrine of “infant damnation” and yet desired to escape the odium of it,

they would probably be very thankful for this definition. It would render the term equivocal, which would be of immense advantage. But they have no occasion for it. They are satisfied with the signification attached to it by theologians of all creeds. There is no term, the theological use of which is more uniform and better understood.

We would ask what period of life Mr. Leavitt refers to, when he says, "As there is nothing that we can do for these little ones to fit them for heaven;" or Mr. Duffield, when he speaks of transferring them "forthwith, as soon as they come into the world;" or Dr. Cox, when he tells us that "if Scripture had affirmed the salvation of *all* infants, or *any class of them under a certain age*, the consequences had been terrible;" or Dr. Spring, when he calls them "babes and sucklings;" or Calvin, when he qualifies the term *children* by the term *infant*? Perhaps these men never thought to define the term, and had no meaning in particular, "except that those on the other side are awful heretics."

We would suggest to the editor of the Observer, that while he is engaged in bringing the Methodists over to the doctrine of the damnation of infants, he might apply the same means, with the same effect, for the purpose of bringing the Baptists over to the doctrine of infant baptism. Let them only give the term "infant" a definition which will include the ages of fourteen, twenty, &c., and they will have no right to "scold" or "speculate" on the subject, but will be fairly convicted of holding to infant baptism "as much as we do."

This reply of the Observer is commended to the notice of the reader, as a specimen of the manner in which Calvinists frequently attempt to escape from the grasp of their opponents. They avail themselves of some far-fetched, and often ridiculous, interpretation; they claim superior precision and learning; and intimate that the objections

urged against them have their origin in ignorance, or a misconception of the subject. Whether the readers of the Observer are satisfied with the editor's explanation, or not, we have no means of ascertaining. We suppose, however, that all are satisfied with it, who have intelligence enough to appreciate its profound erudition.

These, then, are the results of our inquiries on the subject under consideration :—

1. We have shown, we think, by clear and unanswerable argument, that the doctrine that all infants dying in infancy are not saved, is a logical consequence of several of the leading tenets of Calvinism.

2. We find one believer in that system expressing the utmost confidence in the salvation of "untold millions," but there are others of whom he "fondly hopes" that they are saved—he does not deny that this is the case. And he cannot go beyond this in a passage written expressly for the purpose of vindicating himself from the imputation of not believing in the salvation of all infants.

3. Another declares, that we are left in entire ignorance as to the fate of deceased infants—that this is one of the secret things which belong to God. He declines, for this reason, forming any opinion on the subject, and intimates a reluctance to discuss it, affirming that the cause of piety can gain nothing from its discussion.

4. Another not only asserts that we are wholly uninformed respecting the future condition of infants, but brings forward a series of grave arguments against the supposition that all infants dying in infancy are saved.

5. Another not only considers that we are in absolute ignorance on this point, and argues against the doctrine that all infants are saved, but also finds strong presumptions for the damnation of some infants.

6. While another positively affirms the doctrine that infants are swept into the lake of fire and brimstone.

And all these writers are now living, and are ministers of the gospel, or editors of leading periodicals. Three of them, Rev. Messrs. Leavitt, Duffield, and Cox, are known as leading New School Calvinists. Of the Rev. Dr. Spring, a writer in the Presbyterian, (an Old School paper,) says: "And does not Dr. Spring, of New-York, one of the wisest men of the age, and *once the glory of the New School*, now stand amazed at the daring strides of error? And has he not, on this account, retired, and cast in his lot with the Old School? And he is still a Hopkinsian." The editor of the New-York Observer professes to be neutral, but his sympathies are obviously with the New School party, and the Old School papers so understand him.

We therefore conclude that we are fully justified in saying, that the New School party carry their Calvinism so far as to involve in *doubt* the doctrine that all who die in infancy are saved.

Indeed the single position that God has made no revelation on the subject of the future destiny of deceased infants is very suspicious, especially in view of the Saviour's declaration, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God," Luke xviii, 16, a declaration quoted by the Westminster Confession of Faith to prove the salvation of elect infants. If this position be true, no mother has a right to conclude that her departed infant has gone to heaven. Nor can the minister who believes it afford her this consolation. He may say he does not believe that it is damned, but then he means only that he is in absolute ignorance on the subject, and therefore has no right to believe either way. We would also suggest whether this position does not entirely destroy the basis of infant baptism. How can ministers baptize infants, when they are in entire ignorance respecting their relations to the kingdom of God? But they con-

tradict themselves grossly. For in the very argument in which Mr. Duffield undertakes to prove our entire ignorance of the case of infants, he tells us that the children of believers are included in the covenant of grace.

We are forcibly reminded by this doctrine of the answer of the chief priests and elders to our Saviour, when he asked them whether the baptism of John was "from heaven, or of men." "They reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say from heaven, he will say, Why then believed ye him not? But if we say of men, all the people will stone us, for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was." The advocates of the Calvinistic system perceive that if they admit that all infants dying in infancy are safe, they destroy the foundation of their system. If they admit the damnation of some infants, they arouse against it one of the most powerful feelings of humanity. They therefore beg to be excused from forming any opinion on the subject. They have no information, and so had better have no theory. They answer, "We cannot tell."

The arguments used against the doctrine of Methodism, respecting the salvation of infants, are too futile for refutation; but they serve to conclusively show the sentiments of those who employ them. Who could believe a doctrine which he supposes chargeable with such destructive tendencies? "If this doctrine were generally and reverently received, it would lead to terrible consequences—even to infanticide. Parents would probably put their children to death, to secure their salvation." Hear this, ye Arminians, and wonder how it is that you have not murdered all your children, and been hung and damned, long since!!

CHAPTER XXX.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

THE evidence adduced to prove that the teachers of New Divinity are Calvinists, must be more than sufficient to convince our readers that this is the case. We now propose to illustrate the manner in which they endeavour to reconcile the restrictive doctrines of Calvinism with the offers of a free salvation, &c. This part of the argument has been, to some extent, anticipated, but its importance claims for it a more particular and extensive consideration.

Foremost among the devices for this purpose stands the distinction of ability into natural and moral. The manner in which it is applied, has been already several times pointed out. It is affirmed, that all have a natural ability to repent and believe the gospel, but that all have not the moral ability. The natural ability is relied on as justifying the offer of salvation to all, the universal obligation to repentance and faith, and the condemnation and eternal punishment of all who do not repent, believe, and obey the gospel; while the moral inability secures the doctrines of Calvinism. The grace of God is absolutely necessary to overcome this inability, and that grace is imparted to none but the elect.

A very striking exemplification of the position which we have assumed, respecting the use of this distinction, is furnished by Ryland's edition of the Life of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, an eminent minister of the Baptist persuasion in England, who was one of the warmest and ablest advocates of modern Calvinism. He was educated in that denomination, and very early imbibed the Calvinistic faith. Very soon after his conversion, he became engaged in

doctrinal disputes. The question of man's ability to obey God seems to have created his first difficulties, and started his investigations. A short time after his baptism, and uniting in church fellowship with the Baptists, an affair occurred which brought it fairly before him. The circumstances are related by himself. "One of the members having been guilty of drinking to excess, I was the first who knew of it. I immediately went and talked to him, as well as I could, on the evil of his conduct. His answer was, he could not keep himself, and that though I bore so hard on him, I was not my own keeper. At this I felt indignant, considering it as a bad excuse. I therefore told him that he *could* keep himself from such sins as these, and that his way of talking was merely to excuse what was inexcusable. I knew not what else to say at that time, yet the idea of arrogating to be my own keeper seemed too much. He however was offended, and told me that I was young, and did not know the deceitfulness of my own heart. Well, I went and told my pastor, who highly commended me, and said we *could* keep ourselves from *open sins*. We had no power, he observed, to do things spiritually good; but as to outward acts, we had power both to obey the will of God and to disobey it.

"The business soon came before the church, and the offender was unanimously excluded; the excuse which he had made, too, was considered by all, I believe, as an aggravation of his offence. But, this affair being disposed of, the abstract question, *of the power of sinful men to do the will of God, and to keep themselves from sin*, was taken up by some of the leading members of the Church. They readily excused me, as being a babe in religion; but thought the pastor ought to have known better, and to have been able to answer the offender, without betraying the truth. They alleged, that the greatest and best of characters, as recorded in Scripture, never arrogated to

themselves the power of keeping themselves from evil, but constantly prayed for keeping grace ; that, were it not for the restraining goodness and constraining grace of God, earth would be a hell, and the best of men incarnate devils. In short, that, though we are altogether blameworthy for our evil propensities, yet if they were restrained or conquered, it was altogether to be ascribed to God, and not to us.

“ On the other hand, the pastor distinguished between *internal* and *external power*. He allowed that men had no power of themselves to perform any thing spiritually good ; but contended that they could yield external obedience, and keep themselves from open acts of sin. In proof of this, he alleged a great number of Scripture exhortations ; asking, if we had no power to comply with them, why they were given us. The opponents did not deny our being exhorted to do good, and to avoid evil, nor that it was our duty to do both, and our sin to act otherwise ; but they denied that this implied our being sufficient of ourselves to do any thing, even to think a good thought.

“ In these disputes, I continued for some time on the side of my pastor ; but, after a few months, I felt difficulties on the subject, which I could not answer, and which rendered me unhappy. I perceived that *some kind of power* was necessary to render us accountable beings. If we were like stocks or stones, or literally dead, like men in a burying ground, we could with no more propriety than they be commanded to perform any duty. If we were mere machines, there could be no sin chargeable upon us. Yet, on the other hand, the Scriptures expressly affirm that ‘ the way of man is not in himself,’ and represent the godly as crying to Heaven for preservation from evil, ascribing all the good that was in them to Him who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. I prayed much, and laboured hard to solve this difficulty.”

This controversy eventuated in a separation between the pastor and the church. The doctrine of ability continued to be the absorbing topic with Mr. Fuller; and a short time afterward he met with a distinction in reading a work of Dr. Gill, between the power of the *hand* and the power of the *heart*. He eagerly seized upon it, as furnishing the all-important desideratum. He says, "This, (thought I,) is the clew to our dispute. Every man has it in the power of his hand to do good, and abstain from evil; and this is it which makes us accountable beings. We can do, or forbear to do this or that, if we have a mind; but many have not a mind, and none would have such a mind, but for the restraining goodness or constraining grace of God. We have it in the power of our hands to do good, but we are disposed to do evil; and so to do good is not naturally in the power of our hearts."

About the time of his conversion and entrance into the ministry, the Calvinistic churches in England were agitated by the question, "Whether it be the duty of all men, to whom the gospel is published, to repent and believe the gospel." This was called the "MODERN QUESTION." That such a question should ever divide ministers of the gospel seems strange enough. Writers engaged warmly on both sides.

Those who wrote on the negative side seem to have argued from the principles of Calvinism, which amply and firmly sustained them; showing that inasmuch as the unregenerate or reprobate have no power to repent or believe the gospel, and as God had not intended or provided for their salvation, but predestinated their destruction, it cannot be their duty to repent and believe; that they have no warrant to believe in Christ, as he did not redeem them; that for God to require them to believe in Christ as their Saviour, would be to require them to believe a lie in order to salvation; and then, as there is no salvation for them,

to damn them at all events. Those who espoused the affirmative argued from the word of God, which was undoubtedly on their side. But the task devolved on them of reconciling the obligation of all men to repent and believe with the partial tenets of their creed. Here they were compelled to labour with unavailing toil. As a matter of course, the manner of addressing sinners from the pulpit, observed by these preachers, was greatly influenced by the views which they respectively entertained on this question.

Those who carried out the principles of Calvinism to their legitimate consequences were "restrained from imitating our Lord and his apostles, in calling sinners to repent and believe the gospel." The distinctions which they made between internal and external power—between the power of the hand and the power of the heart—enabled them to address, to some extent, the consciences of sinners—to admonish them to abstain from open and flagrant wickedness, and attend on the means of grace, and act like orderly citizens; but they could say nothing to them from the pulpit in the way of warning them to flee from the wrath to come, or inviting them to apply to Christ for salvation.

It is obvious that these distinctions, instead of relieving Calvinism of its difficulties, serve only to render them more fearfully visible. While they separate obedience to that part of the law of God which relates to outward acts, by which alone human society is directly benefited or injured, from inward, spiritual principle, they lead to the conclusion, that the utmost efforts of which the non-elect are capable must be utterly unavailing to their salvation. These outcasts may so far conform to the divine law as to relieve the elect from the necessity of living in the midst of an openly vicious and persecuting population, help them to build churches, support ministers, acquire

property, and may become in all respects the more humble servants of the elect; but they cannot escape the damnation of hell.

Mr. Fuller was at this time a decided and consistent Calvinist; and although his mind had become somewhat agitated and unsettled by the disputes in which he had been involved, he did not, durst not, for some years, address an invitation to the unconverted to come to Jesus. He had very little to say to the unconverted; at least, nothing in a way of exhortation to things spiritually good or certainly connected with salvation. He read some authors, who, while they maintained the doctrines of election and predestination, nevertheless held with the free offer of salvation to sinners without distinction, and dealt in free invitations to sinners to come to Christ and be saved—Bunyan, for instance, and all the old writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that came in his way. But the consistency of these invitations with personal election he could not understand. These were things which he could not then reconcile. He supposed that Bunyan, though a great and good man, was not so clear in his views of the doctrines of the gospel as the writers who succeeded him. He perceived that the Scriptures abounded with exhortations and invitations to sinners; but he supposed there must be two kinds of holiness—one of which was possessed by man in innocence, and was binding on all his posterity—the other derived from Christ, and binding only on his people. The exhortations to repentance and faith, addressed in the New Testament to the unconverted, he supposed to refer only to such external repentance and faith as were within their power, and might be complied with without the grace of God.

Notwithstanding the plausibility with which these distinctions on the subject of power first presented themselves to the mind of Mr. Fuller, he did not long continue satis-

fied with them; and no wonder. They show to what desperate subterfuges Calvinism compels its votaries. He began to doubt whether he had the truth respecting this subject:—"I perceived," says he, "that the will of God was not confined to mere outward actions, but extended to the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart. The distinction of duties therefore into internal and external, and making the latter only concern the unregenerate, wore a suspicious appearance. But as I perceived this reasoning would affect the whole tenor of my preaching, I moved on with slow and trembling steps; and, having to feel my way out of a labyrinth, I was a long time ere I was satisfied."

Shortly after this period he visited London, where he met with a pamphlet which revived all his doubts as to the correctness of his theory, both with respect to the duty of sinners, and of ministers in addressing them. This pamphlet was written by Dr. Abraham Taylor, of London, on the affirmative side of the modern question. "I had never (says Mr. Fuller) seen any thing relative to this controversy before, although the subject, as I have stated, had occupied my thoughts. I was but little impressed by his reasonings till he came to the addresses of John the Baptist, Christ, and the apostles, which he proved to be addressed to the ungodly, and to mean spiritual repentance and faith, inasmuch as they were connected with the remission of sins. This set me fast. I read and examined the Scripture passages; and the more I read and thought, the more I doubted the justice of my former views." He also, about the same time, met with a sermon which increased his difficulties, and he became very unhappy. He doubted the correctness of his views and his preaching, and yet was not fully convinced of their inaccuracy. What he wanted was evidently a more satisfactory method of reconciling the obligation of all

men to repent and believe the gospel, and the free offer of salvation to sinners, with the foreordination of all events, and the personal unconditional election of a part of mankind to eternal life, to the absolute exclusion of all the rest.

Very opportunely, at this most critical juncture, our bewildered theologian met with the distinction of ability into natural and moral, and the theory of natural ability and moral inability. This relieved him. For, by attributing to the sinner a natural or physical ability, he felt himself justified in calling on sinners to repent and believe. While by the doctrine of a moral inability, which nothing but the special and distinguishing grace of God can remove, he secured his darling Calvinism. This grace is given to none but the elect, so that, notwithstanding the natural ability, none but the elect can be saved. He particularly mentions that his change of views on duty and ability never abated his zeal for Calvinism, but, in some respects, increased it. He declares that he never had any predilections for Arminianism; which appeared to him to ascribe the difference between one sinner and another, not to the effectual grace of God, but to the good improvement made of grace given us in common with others.

The source to which Mr. F. was indebted for this wonderful and invaluable discovery—this solution of all his difficulties—was Dr. Jonathan Edwards' Treatise on the Will; to whom, it would seem, belongs the honour of elaborating the subject of power to these sublimated forms of exhibition. This work appears to have been working, at that time, most wonderful effects on the minds of transatlantic theologians. It was recommended to Mr. Fuller by the Rev. Mr. Hall of Arnsby.

The case of Mr. Fuller has been introduced, at length, because it clearly illustrates and confirms the position designed to be established; and presents the interesting

spectacle of a great and honest mind struggling with the difficulties of that perplexing creed to which he was devoted. And, no doubt, we have presented in this example the process of hundreds of minds, in advancing from the same starting point to the same conclusions. The Rev. Mr. Ryland, the author of these memoirs, states his own experience on this subject in a note:—"The sixty-second of Samuel Rutherford's letters was one of the first things that put me to a stand on this subject. Closely studying Edwards on the Will, and entering into the distinction between natural and moral ability, removed the difficulties which had once embarrassed my mind. In 1776, I borrowed of Mr. Newton, of Olney, two sermons on this subject by Mr. Smalley, which Brother Sutcliffe afterward reprinted from the copy which I transcribed. I well remember lending them to Mr. Hall, of Arnsby, to whom I remarked, that I was ready to suspect that this distinction, well considered, would lead us to see that the affirmative side of the modern question was *fully consistent with the strictest Calvinism*. He replied, 'I do not think that.' But, I believe, the next time I met him was at a ministers' meeting at Kettering, when I found he was fully satisfied with the truth of my observations. And in another note he says, 'I question much if any man can steer clear of false Calvinism, on the one hand, and real Arminianism on the other, without entering into the distinction between natural and moral ability, as it is called.'

The sermons by Mr. Smalley, just referred to, fell into our hands several years since. The distinction is thus stated and applied by that author: "These two kinds of inability, as I hinted, have commonly been distinguished by calling one a natural ability, the other a moral ability; which distinction may be briefly stated thus—moral inability consists only in the want of a heart, or disposition, or will to do a thing. Natural

inability, on the other hand, consists in, or arises from, want of understanding, bodily strength, opportunity, or whatever may prevent our doing a thing when we are willing, and strongly enough disposed and inclined to do it. Or in fewer words, thus—whatever a man could not do if he would, he is under a natural inability of doing. But when all the reason why one cannot do a thing is, because he does not choose to do it, the inability is only of a moral nature.

“The point of doctrine which I shall insist on from these words is this: That none are able to comply with the gospel but those who are the subjects of the special and effectual grace of God, or those who are made willing and do actually comply with it.”

The title of these sermons is, “The Inability of the Sinner to comply with the Gospel, and his Inexcusable Guilt in not complying with it, and these two reconciled.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

THE distinction which is the subject of the preceding chapter is resorted to by Mr. Barnes, for the same purpose. In a note to his sermon on “The Way of Salvation,” he remarks: “If God requires more of men than *in any sense* they are able to perform, then, in the practical judgment of all men, according to the reason he has given them, he is unjust. That there is something which makes certain the *result* that a sinner will not, of himself, believe, is the doctrine of the New Testament, John v, 40; vi, 44. If this be such as in all cases to put it beyond *his power* to do it, then it frees him from obligation; if not, he may be urged still to do it. The distinction,

then, between natural and moral ability referred to here, is not one of mere speculation." This passage plainly indicates the use of this distinction. Man must be supposed to have ability "in some sense," or he is "free from obligation," and yet there is something which "makes certain the result that the sinner will not of himself believe." This want of will on the part of the sinner, which something makes certain, is the moral inability.

Mr. B. frequently asserts the *necessity* of the *special agency* of the Holy Spirit in order to conversion. In the sermon just referred to, he observes: "If the last point which I suggested be true, that all are disposed to reject the scheme, then it would seem to follow, that if any are saved, it will be by the special agency of God."—*Defence*, p. 27.

His theory also restricts this indispensable agency to a portion of mankind. "If then," he says, "God renews the heart by his Holy Spirit—if he *begins* and *carries on* the work in all that shall be *saved*, and holds the power of doing this over *all men*, and does *not* thus incline *all* to come to him, and it be asked, as well it may be, why he does not renew and save *all*—we have only to say, that all do not *choose* to be saved, and *will not* come to him." This is a very convenient solution of the question, why God does not exert the influence on *all men* which he does on *some*. But Mr. B. knew that according to his scheme there is a cause beyond the choice of the sinner. He holds that none will "come to Christ" and "*choose* to be saved, unless God *makes them willing*—that the *result* is invariably the expression of the divine *decree*." Is it not remarkable, then, that he should assign as a reason why God does not "incline all to come to him," that all are not previously inclined? The reason assigned for this special agency, in any case, is, that without it *none* will "*choose*" and "*will*," and be inclined to come to

Christ ; so that the reason why he inclines some, is given as the reason why he does not incline others.

But he comes to the point at last. "If it be asked why the great Sovereign of the world does not *constrain* them to come, and bring *all* to heaven, I answer, my power of reason fails ; my understanding faints, and is weary ; and I ask also, why he did not keep by his power men and devils from falling, and save the universe from sin and sorrow altogether ? Secret things belong to God, and I can only say, as God's only-begotten Son said long since, ' Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.' "

We are now clearly informed that the special influence absolutely necessary to conversion and salvation, is vouchsafed to some and withheld from others ; and Mr. B. acknowledges his inability to account for the discrimination otherwise than by resolving it into the good pleasure of God. Here is the doctrine of the unconditional election of some to eternal life.

He advances the same sentiment in the following note, on the words "*Whom he will he hardeneth*," Rom. ix. "The word *hardeneth* means only to harden in the manner specified in the case of Pharaoh. It does not mean to exert a positive influence, but to leave a sinner to his chosen course, and to place him in circumstances where the character will be more and more developed.—*See note* John xii, 40. It implies, however, an act of sovereignty on the part of God in thus leaving him to his chosen course, and in not putting forth that influence by which he could be saved from death. Why this is the apostle does not state. We should, however, not dispute a fact every where prevalent, and should have sufficient confidence in God to believe that it is in accordance with infinite wisdom and rectitude."

We are here expressly informed that it is "a fact every

where prevalent" that God, as an "act of sovereignty," leaves some sinners to their "chosen course," and declines "putting forth the influence by which they could be saved from death;" and it as clearly implies that there are others whom he does *not* leave to their "chosen course," but "puts forth, in their case, the necessary influence." It is also intimated that the reason for this discrimination is unknown.

It is also a part of Mr. B.'s system, *that God saves men in every instance in which he designs to save them, notwithstanding their unwillingness.* In his note on "*Not of him that willeth,*" he remarks, "This does not mean that he that becomes a Christian and is saved does not choose eternal life, or is not made willing; or that he is compelled to enter heaven against his choice. It is true that men by nature have no desire of holiness, and do not choose eternal life. But the effect of the influence of God's Spirit on the heart is to make it 'willing in the day of his power.'"

The doctrine of this comment is, not only, that without the influences of God's Spirit on the heart, "men have no desire of holiness and do not choose eternal life," but also, that the effect of the influence of the Spirit is to *make willing* those who are *unwilling*. True, he cautions against the supposition that men become Christians without *choosing*, or that they are compelled *against* their choice. But if they choose, it is, according to his theory, because they are *made* to choose—because they are "made willing." If they are not "compelled against their choice" it is because their choice itself is compelled in the prescribed direction. He tells us in his sermon that "the Spirit of God acts on the will,"—p. 28.

As this distinction between being made willing, and being compelled against the will, is deemed of great importance in Calvinistic theology, and as some of our

readers may not be familiar with it, we will present an illustration by a Calvinistic writer, the Rev. Pharcellus Church, of the Baptist persuasion. It occurs in his "Prize Essay on Religious Dissensions."

"If a man slides from the edge of a precipice, and nothing intercepts his course, there is a natural necessity that he should fall to the bottom. However much he might choose to stop, it would be in vain. Gravity is a force over which the will could have no control under such circumstances.

"But suppose the man were to rise at midnight, enter the dwelling of a neighbour, massacre him, and then rob and burn his house; and suppose the motive influencing him to so foul a deed depended upon an assemblage of incidents and circumstances which had been operating from his childhood, and over which he had no more control than over the force of gravitation in his fall from the precipice; where would be the difference in the two cases? Why, there would be this important difference, that the force of gravity would not conquer his desire not to fall, while the incidents and circumstances which gave strength to the motive leading him to commit the murder, would overcome his desire not to commit it. In the one case, he would be forced against his will, and in the other his will would be led captive."—p. 143.

It is by the magic influence of the distinction, which this writer so clearly illustrates, that they are enabled to hold and affirm that men are "made willing"—are *compelled* to become Christians, and yet are not compelled *against* their *choice*, but *choose* to become Christians. Their wills are "led captive."

Here then is a basis broad enough to sustain the entire fabric of Calvinism, notwithstanding its appendage of "natural ability." The special agency of God is necessary to the salvation of a sinner. That agency is vouch-

safed to some and not to others,—and those to whom it is granted it *makes willing* to do whatever is necessary to salvation.

On this subject Mr. Duffield remarks, “Now it is by the Holy Spirit which proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and whom the Son *giveth to whomsoever he will*, that a connection is established between him and the guilty soul of man.”—p. 348.

And in describing the progress and result of the Spirit’s operations on the heart of the sinner, he tells us, that “object after object, truth after truth, motive after motive, are presented. Reiterated appeals are made to the conscience and the heart, and eventually, *when he is pleased in sovereign mercy to subdue*, one and another believe, and are *made willing* to forsake their sins. They never would have done so, but for such a procedure of grace on the part of God.”—p. 484.

We have the views of Dr. Beecher in the following passages: “The doctrine of the moral impotency of man is not inconsistent with any other of the doctrines of the Bible. It is not inconsistent with the doctrine of our entire and absolute dependance for regeneration on the special influence of the Holy Spirit; for, while it includes a natural ability to obedience, as the ground of obligation, it teaches the certainty of its obstinate perversion, creating in point of fact a necessity of the Holy Ghost to renew, as real and as great as if the impediment were a natural impossibility.”—*Views in Theology*, p. 118.

Compare the foregoing with the following: “The question, as we have said, is not a question of possible or impossible, but a question of FACT, as to the manner in which God does actually call effectually sinners into his kingdom—a question of wisdom and goodness in doing what is best in the best manner.

“I have no sympathy for the opinion that it depends

on sinners whether they be regenerated or not in the day of his power ; or that God does all he can, and leaves the event of submission or not to rebel man," &c.—p. 209.

The reason assigned by Mr. Lord, the New-York author of "Views in Theology," why "men are not led earlier than they are to the exercise of right affections, inasmuch as the same motives are often previously urged in the same manner on their sensibilities," is, that "the commandment has never been brought home to their sensibilities, by the higher influences of the Spirit."—Vol. 3, No. 11, p. 294.

A writer in the Quarterly Christian Spectator gives a most startling exhibition of this feature of the New School theological system, in a "Review of Dr. Tyler's Strictures on the Christian Spectator." We have there the appalling declaration, that "there may be acts requisite on the part of the sinner, without which, renewing grace will never be exerted ; and yet that grace may not be pledged to accompany those acts in any instance." The writer adds, "It was thus we stated the case in our concluding number. We there dwelt at length on that most alarming fact to impenitent sinners, that the intervention of the Holy Spirit is in no instance pledged to any act of theirs ; that there is at best but a bare 'per-adventure' that 'God will give them repentance.' Nor is this inconsistent with saying that sinners have something to do *in order* to be saved."—Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 156.

It is not common for the New School writers to present the subject in this light. They generally teach that the required acts are invariably connected with salvation ; relying, for the safety of Calvinism, on the supposition that none will ever perform the exercises required, but the elect. We are indebted for this disclosure to an attempt to reconcile Calvinism with the proper conditionality of salvation.

The reader is now fully apprized of one of the securities by which Calvinism is guarded, while salvation is offered to all, and the ability and obligation of elect and non-elect, to repent and believe, are strenuously inculcated.

Plausible as this theory of natural ability and moral inability may appear at first sight, it is liable to fatal exceptions.

It fails to answer the end designed by those who resort to it. It does not remove the difficulty for which it is intended. It is utterly inefficient, except for the purpose of temporary delusion. It may secure Calvinism effectually ; but it does not furnish solid ground on which to base the general invitations of the gospel, and to proclaim a free salvation.

Of what advantage is it for me to possess a natural ability to meet the requirements of the gospel, if, at the same time, I am subject to a moral inability which renders me absolutely dependant on the special influence of the Holy Spirit for regeneration ; so that it does not depend on myself whether I am regenerated or not ; and God has decreed to withhold that influence from me. So far as my prospect of salvation is concerned, I might as well be subject to a natural inability to comply with these requirements. Nothing is gained by this theory, over that which affirms an entire and unqualified inability, on the part of the unregenerate, to do any thing toward their salvation except a delusive and tantalizing phraseology. The man who offers salvation to all, on this theory, believes, at the same time, that the repentance and salvation of any depend on the vouchsafement of an influence which God has determined to withhold from a great portion of our race.

Neither does this theory vindicate the divine government in requiring universal repentance and faith, and punishing the impenitent and unbelieving. If it would be just

for God to demand repentance and faith under these circumstances, it would be equally just in case the inability were natural. And the infliction of punishment would be equally just in both cases. The attempt to justify the punishment of the unregenerate on the ground that he possesses a "kind of ability," while another kind, wholly indispensable, and for which he is dependant on God, is designedly withheld from him, is grossly absurd. It would not be more absurd to require an idiot to compose and deliver an eloquent oration, and then punish him severely for the failure ; and undertake to justify the requisition and the punishment, on the ground that he possesses a kind or kinds of ability—that he possesses corporeal and moral ability—the organs of speech and the faculty and power of willing, and that all that is wanting is the intellectual ability. It would be as reasonable to require a man to distinguish objects amid total darkness, and punish him on the ground that he possesses the organs of vision. There is something necessary which the sinner is supposed to possess ; but there is something else, equally indispensable which he does not possess—which God alone can impart, and yet purposely withholds. The Egyptians are pronounced tyrants, because they compelled the Hebrews to make bricks without the requisite quantity of straw ; they did not cut off the hands or put out the eyes of the Hebrews, and then require the full quantity of bricks. They merely withheld one necessary article. And we now ask if it will be contended that the straw was of more importance in the manufacture of bricks, than the influences of the Holy Spirit to repentance and faith ; that while there was execrable injustice in the former case, it is perfectly just to withhold those influences, and yet require the exercises for which they are absolutely indispensable ? It is supposed that the government of God is sufficiently vindicated by the consideration that the inability of the sin-

ner is *moral*. One writer makes use of this short argument : "moral and therefore criminal." The conclusiveness of this argument will depend altogether on the meaning attached to the term *moral*. If it signify that the inability or unwillingness is strictly *voluntary*, the inference is correct ; but then there will be this difficulty, that according to the system which we oppose, the inability is not moral in the sense of voluntary. The ability or willingness, which is its opposite, is supposed to depend, at any imaginable period of the sinner's existence, on the influences of the Holy Spirit, and those influences have never been, and never will be imparted to any but the elect. We can easily see how it would be criminal in a man to starve himself to death, when he could honestly obtain plenty of food ; but the case would be altered if his starvation were owing to his utter inability to procure it. In the one case he would be pronounced guilty of suicide, in the other an object of pity.

The theory under review has to encounter this philosophical difficulty, admitting for a moment, that the distinction on which it is founded is correct. The acts required of the sinner are moral acts, and therefore require moral power, just as lifting a weight requires muscular power. But the power required by the sinner happens to be that of which he is confessedly and helplessly destitute. So that it may be as reasonably required of him to remove a mountain, or build a house, by argumentation, as to repent and believe in his present circumstances.

Again : this theory involves an absolute contradiction. It represents men as possessing a real ability, and yet subject to a real inability, with respect to the same thing at the same time. It is quite possible for a man to possess ability to do one thing, and yet, at the same time, be wholly unable to perform another ; or to be able to perform a certain thing at one time, and unable to perform it

at another time. But to be both able and unable, with reference to the same thing, and at the same time, is impossible. If this scheme of ability does not express a contradiction, a contradiction is impossible.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

HITHERTO, we have confined our argument on the distinction of ability into natural and moral, to the *use* to which it is applied. But as it is made the basis of a pernicious system of doctrines, and relied on to effect an apparent reconciliation between tenets which have no affinities for each other, we may render some service to the cause of truth by examining the distinction itself.

We do not object to distinguishing power into kinds. This is frequently done with propriety and advantage. Our constitutional faculties are distinguished into corporeal or physical, intellectual, and moral. Each class of faculties is supposed to possess its own peculiar energy, and hence we have physical, intellectual, and moral power. But the propriety of distinguishing power into *natural* and *moral* is more than doubtful; because these faculties are all natural, and the power pertaining to one class is as much natural as that which pertains to any other class. The power may be moral, but it does not follow that it is not natural. It is both natural and moral, and not natural in contradistinction to moral. We may, with as much reason, place natural and intellectual power in contradistinction to each other, as natural and moral power.

If the term "moral" were used, in this instance, in the sense of supernatural, there would be a real distinction

between natural and moral power. But this is not the sense in which it is used. And, even if it were, our New School brethren would be chargeable with the inconsistency of maintaining, that man has natural ability to accomplish that for which supernatural ability is indispensable.

And further, if the term *moral* in this distinction were used in the sense of supernatural, the distinction would respect, not the *kinds*, but the *sources* of power. All the kinds of power with which we are acquainted, are physical or corporeal, intellectual, and moral. These kinds are all natural to man; and yet the physical, or intellectual, or moral power, by which he performs particular actions, may not be natural to him. For instance, the prophets and apostles had intellectual power naturally; but had they naturally the power to conceive and utter those infallible oracles by which we are required to regulate our faith and practice? Certainly not. Samson had naturally physical or corporeal power, but that he had naturally the power necessary to perform those astonishing feats ascribed to him, is doubtful. The history plainly indicates that it was supernatural—given to him by God for the special purposes for which it was exerted. “When the Philistines shouted against him, *the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him*; and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burned with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.” Before he displaced the pillars of his prison-house, and crushed beneath the falling fabric himself and the lords of the Philistines, he “called on the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and *strengthen me*. I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.” The connection between his strength and “the seven locks of his head,” shows that his strength

was supernatural. This connection was not natural ;—it was arbitrary ; established by God for purposes similar to those for which the Saviour anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay and spittle.

When, therefore, the New School theologians use the word natural to designate a “kind of power,” and identify natural power, as a kind, with physical and intellectual power, in opposition to moral power, they most egregiously misapply the term ; since moral power is just as much natural as any other kind ; while the physical and intellectual power necessary to the performance of certain actions, may not be natural, as in the cases specified. The terms “natural power” and “supernatural power” do not represent particular kinds of power. They simply indicate the sources of power—whether it belongs to the constitution of the individual, or whether it is foreign to the constitution, and imparted to him by some other being.

But let us inquire what is this power, called moral, in contradistinction to natural. It is said to consist in inclination. But we have already seen that an individual may possess the desire, inclination, or disposition, to perform a particular action, and yet be wholly unable, notwithstanding he may be in the possession of all his faculties. So that the moral ability is an ability which does not constitute him able, and, consequently, is no ability at all. But if we grant, for argument’s sake, that it is a real ability, this absurdity will follow,—that I may have a real ability to bestow money on a poor and suffering applicant, when, at the same time, I have not a farthing at my disposal.

Again, this definition, by identifying power with inclination, leads to a most perplexing perversion of language, and blends, in entire confusion, some of the plainest and most distinct conceptions of the human mind. Inclination and ability are universally understood to be distinct. Men are every day pronounced willing, and yet unable to per-

form actions : and, on this account, are excused or justified. They are also pronounced able, and yet unwilling ; and, on this account, are condemned. But this sapient distinction confounds what is thus universally distinguished, and sanctions the following absurd and bewildering conclusions,—that those who are willing to perform an action, but wholly destitute of the requisite power and means, are at the same time able to perform it ; they have the moral ability ; while those who have ample means, and full power, and are merely unwilling, are nevertheless unable. Again, as ability is the ground of moral obligation, and justifies the punishment of disobedience, it follows from these notions that men are under obligation to do what they are *unable* because they are *able* ; and likewise that they are justified in not doing what they are *unable* to do, because they are *able* ; and likewise punished for not doing what they are *able* to do, not only *while* they are *unable*, but also *because* they are *unable*. Such is the jargon which this wonderful philosophy authorizes.

But while this distinction, as explained by its advocates, leads to such horrible chaos of thought and expression, it answers most admirably the purposes of New School divinity. “Some kind of ability” to obey the gospel must be attributed to the sinner, to give plausibility to the doctrine of his accountability, and the offers of a free salvation, while some kind of inability must be attributed to him to secure Calvinism. On the ground of natural ability, the sinner can be assured “that the reason why he does not come to Christ is, he will not,”—“that he may be saved if he will.” These propositions certainly look very fair and unexceptionable. One might suppose that the most rigid Arminian could not fail to be satisfied with them. Surely no Methodist preacher preaches a freer salvation than this. Ay! and who would suppose, that these fair-faced, smooth-tongued propositions contained

the doctrine of a real inability to come to Christ and be saved ; and were carefully constructed, so as to secure the doctrine that God has elected a certain number to salvation from all eternity, to the exclusion of all the rest ; and that the number is so definite, that it cannot be increased or diminished ? But in what parts of the propositions is this inability concealed ? In those which relate to the *will*. In New Schoolism, inclination and ability, disinclination and inability are identical. In the New School vocabulary, the terms *will* and *can*, *will not* and *cannot*, mean the same thing. They are employed interchangeably, as orthodoxy, or the popular ear, may require. Give the term “will” its technical, New School signification, and these propositions mean, “The reason why the sinner does not come to Christ is he *cannot*.” “The sinner may be saved if he *can*.” In that portentous and generally italicized clause “*if he will*,” lies the awful record of the fate of the poor reprobate. That “will” is the moral ability which none have but those to whom God gives it, and he has eternally decreed to give it to none but the elect.

If by the term *will* we understand the power or faculty of willing—as that is a constitutional faculty—essential to free agency, the absence of it must constitute, according to the distinction in question, a natural, and not a moral inability.

Perhaps it may be supposed that this theory will appear to greater advantage if the term *will* be taken in the sense of actual volition. This is the only alternative that remains. But if it be thus explained and used, as it often is in this controversy, and actual volition be considered to constitute the moral ability, and the absence of it the moral inability, it will follow, indubitably, that the action and the power to perform it, are identical. The moral ability is not only the power by which the act is performed, but it is the act itself. The act is its own cause. And the

explanation of the sinner's conduct is this,—he does not obey God because he does not obey God; he does not perform the act because he has not the act. He has not the ability because he does not perform the ability. The very plausible propositions, that the sinner cannot obey God unless he has the moral ability, he can if he will, &c., convey to us this most important instruction—the sinner cannot obey God unless he does obey him; he can obey him if he obeys him.

The secret of the whole matter is this: It was found necessary to distinguish the ability to serve God into "sorts" or "kinds." The sinner must be allowed to have some sort of ability, or it is useless to offer him salvation. He must, at the same time, be considered subject to some sort of inability, or the doctrines of partial redemption and Calvinistic election are endangered. And then a nomenclature must be found for these kinds of ability. The name of the ability which all are supposed to possess, must convey the idea of a real ability, and yet have such a definition as may be made to comport with the scheme which it seems to contradict. It may therefore be called a "natural" ability, and defined to consist in the possession of constitutional faculties, &c.

As for the other kind of ability, it may be called "moral;" for there is not a more convenient word in the English language. It means almost every thing. We have the distinction of conduct into moral and immoral,—of faculties into moral, intellectual, and corporeal,—of laws into moral and positive—moral and ceremonial,—of evidence into moral and demonstrative,—of agents into moral and unintelligent;—and why cannot we have a moral ability, as distinguished from natural? This is the very name. And if among all the senses of this wonderful word, the sense which this distinction requires is not to be found, learned men need only conspire to give it a new

sense. Professors of colleges can honour it with a new diploma. Both of these terms are perfectly arbitrary. They are mere technicalities, which none but the initiated are intended to understand.

Unreasonable as this distinction is, its advocates attempt to justify it both by reason and Scripture. And it is not to be wondered at, that men of superior learning and genius, should succeed in presenting it in somewhat plausible aspects. But the fact that the utmost efforts of such men have utterly failed to establish it, furnishes no feeble presumption of its invalidity.

They insist that it is universally recognised. Mr. Duffield says, "Every body understands the subject, and distinguishes thus between natural and moral ability. The giddy and thoughtless child is punished who says he cannot get his lesson, it being well understood that either a dislike for his book, or some other considerations, prevent him from applying his mind to it. The servant is accounted guilty who makes the same plea. The parent sees a thousand exemplifications of this thing, and if he were, in all cases, to admit the truth of the child's declarations as to ability, he might soon cease to command."

It is readily admitted that the word *cannot* is frequently used to signify want of will or disposition, and that the phrase "*I cannot*" is frequently given in reply to solicitations, when the persons replying are merely unwilling. But in such cases no real inability exists. In many instances it is not intended to convey the idea of inability; but merely that of reluctance or inconvenience. It is often employed to express an ill-natured refusal. It is true, it is sometimes intended to convey the idea of real inability, where there is nothing but unwillingness; but in such cases persons may either be mistaken as to the power they possess, imagining themselves unable when they are not; or they may assert what they know to be

a falsehood. In the example of Mr. Duffield, the child is punished who *says* "he cannot get his lesson." But why is he punished? Because his saying "he cannot get his lesson" is understood to be mere pretence. The parent does not distinguish between natural and moral ability. He distinguishes between inability and unwillingness. He knows there is no inability in the case. The servant makes the same plea, but the master does not believe him. He knows the plea is false. "If the parent," says Mr. Duffield, "were in all cases to admit the truth of the child's declaration as to ability, he might soon cease to command." And yet, is it not obvious that the fate of this theory depends altogether on admitting "the truth of the child's declarations?" If their truth be not admitted, the example furnishes no proof of the position it was brought forward to establish. It proves merely that people everywhere distinguish between inability, and an attempt at imposition, by falsely alleging an inability where it does not exist. But if every person understands the distinction of natural and moral ability—if the terms *unable* and *unwilling*, *cannot* and *will not*, are universally understood to mean the same thing, is it not somewhat singular that men should attempt to impose on each other, by saying that they are unable, when they are merely unwilling? Do they not know that they are attempting to deceive by words which convey no deceptive meaning? Would they not, if that were the case, invariably qualify their declarations of inability, for the purpose of deception, by saying, I am *naturally* unable? The fact that men do attempt to deceive by pretending to inability simply, when they are merely unwilling, proves plainly that they do not consider inability and unwillingness to be the same thing.

In order to make out the universal recognition of this distinction, its advocates find it necessary to misstate the question at issue. Dr. Beecher remarks, "I have said

that this use of the terms *cannot*, *unable*, &c., to indicate those things which men are able to perform, but do not choose to do, is not a phraseology peculiar to the Bible, but is a mode of speaking into which the universal mind of man in all nations, ages, and languages, has fallen." Again: "There is hardly an author of repute, from the time of Alfred to the present day—whether a poet, a historian, an essayist, or a metaphysician, who does not afford abundant examples of *such use* of the word *cannot*."

Now all this is wide of the mark. No one denies that the "terms *cannot*, *unable*, &c.," are used "to indicate those things which men are able to perform, but do not choose to do." If this be all the doctor undertakes to prove, he might have declined the unnecessary trouble. But this is a very different thing from proving that whenever the terms *cannot*, *unable*, &c., are so used, they signify a *real inability*, and that, therefore, there are *two kinds* of inability. All that he has proved is, that these terms are frequently used when it is understood that there is no inability in the case.

The supposed Scripture proofs consist chiefly in examples in which the word "cannot" is used, when it is presumed that there is no absolute inability. The reasonings on these examples will be found to proceed on two false assumptions.

In the first place, it is assumed that the word "cannot" invariably implies a *real inability*. If this be not the case, the texts in which it is used may furnish no proof of the disputed distinction. Secondly, it is assumed that while the term *cannot* always implies *real inability*, it does not in any of these examples import a *natural inability*. For if it does, the texts not only furnish no proof of the distinction of ability into natural and moral, but expressly contradict the doctrine that all have a natural ability to serve God; and thus, at the same time, directly dis-

prove the distinction, and uproot the theory which it is intended to sustain.

Let us then test these assumptions. In the first place, we are not authorized to infer invariably the existence of a real inability from the use of the term *cannot*. It is often used when no inability is intended—to express mere refusal. And in many instances when it is used purposely to convey the idea of inability, we do not infer from it the existence of inability. We suppose the individual to be mistaken in the estimate of his power. He says, "he cannot," but we have no doubt that he can. In other instances it is used for deception. The individual who says, "I cannot," knows at the same time that he can; but he intends to deceive. He asserts what he knows to be false. The term sometimes signifies inconvenience. For instance, I ask a friend to accompany me to some distant place. He is pleased with the proposal, and unhesitatingly consents. He makes all necessary preparation; but just as we are about to leave, some emergency arrests his attention. He is ardently desirous to go, but it is very inconvenient. He hesitates and resolves, and resolves and hesitates; and at last, by a powerful effort of self-denial, he says, "I cannot go." He does not intend to assert inability, but merely great inconvenience; and this he does in the strong hyperbolical language, "I cannot."

In reply to the second assumption, we affirm, that whenever the term imports real inability, that inability is natural. It may, perhaps, without any impropriety, be called moral, but it is as certainly a natural inability, as it is an inability at all. It will be found, on investigation, to have its seat in the constitution of our nature. Moral inability is said to consist in a want of will. The term *will* in this controversy, signifies sometimes the faculty itself—the power of willing—sometimes inclination or desire—sometimes the exercise of the faculty, or actual volition. Now,

if we understand by this term, the faculty of willing—this being a natural faculty, the inability which consists in its absence must be natural. If we take it to mean inclination, and suppose that its absence constitutes a real inability, it must be because there is something in the constitution of our nature, by which we are disqualified to do what we have no inclination to do, or to do which we are strongly disinclined ; and the inability is therefore natural. But if there be nothing in the constitution of our nature which disqualifies us for doing that for which we have no inclination—if still we have ability, the want of inclination does not cause or constitute a real inability, and the proof of the distinction fails. If the term “will” be understood to mean simple, actual volition, we have the absurdity of identifying the act itself with the ability to perform it.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

WE will now proceed to review the examples adduced by Mr. Duffield and Dr. Beecher, in support of this distinction. The first, by Mr. D., is Samuel's reply, when God commanded him to go and anoint David, “How *can I go*? if Saul hear it, he will kill me.” He reasons thus: “While Samuel's unbelief and fears prevailed, his will was prevented from giving its consent to go, and he felt as if it were a thing utterly impossible which the Lord required.” It is here assumed that Samuel laboured under a real inability, because he says, “How can I go?” and that it was not a natural inability, but consisted in a refusal of the will. He could have gone if he would. And the inference is, that it was therefore a moral inability.

Our answer is, either that Samuel did not intend to assert inability, but used the expression figuratively, to denote great inconvenience or reluctance; or his feeling that it was a thing utterly impossible was a mistaken impression, supposing that to be impossible which was not; or if there was a real inability, that inability was natural. It arose out of the constitution of his nature—out of the conflict between the emotion of fear, and the power of willing; which are constitutional principles, in which his fears prevailed, and prevented that act of the will which was naturally and absolutely necessary to obedience.

The next example is the passage in which the Apostle Paul says, with respect to the “cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat” in the holy of holies, “of which we *cannot* now speak particularly.” The only reply necessary is, that the apostle did not intend to assert inability. The word “cannot” is used in a figurative sense to signify inconvenience. It would have been an unnecessary digression from the subject which the apostle was discussing.

The next example is in the words of our Saviour, “Can the children of the bridegroom fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as the bridegroom is with them they cannot fast.” “This,” says Mr. D., “is wholly an inability of will.” We reply, there is no inability in the case. The Saviour did not intend to assert inability. The language is figurative, and Mr. D.’s comment confirms this declaration. He says, “The thing itself is *not impossible*, but the season is one which is generally so joyous, and is wont to be so connected with festivity as to render it morally impossible to fast. Men are rendered unwilling, reluctant to do what they *are able*, and under other circumstances they might be induced to do.” It is true, he says it is “morally impossible;” but it would seem that in his vocabulary, “morally impossible” and “not impossible”

mean the same thing : and our Saviour is made to affirm that they are *not able* to do what it is “not impossible” for them to do ; but “what they *are* able, and under other circumstances might be induced to do.” Surely this text and comment will multiply converts to the distinction very rapidly !

The fourth example is as follows :—“In like manner the Evangelist John says, ‘that there are many things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself *could not* contain the books that should be written.’ This was not a natural impossibility.” The reader will at once perceive the special aptness of this illustration, and how admirably it sustains the author’s distinction. The world, it is supposed, possessed a natural ability to contain the books, but was destitute of the moral ability—was unwilling—positively refused. What a wicked world ! The reader will endeavour to suppress any irreverent disposition to smile, as this distinction is deemed of very great importance. Desperate indeed must be the cause which trusts to such proofs for support. Who does not perceive, at one glance, that the evangelist merely uses a strong figurative expression, to suggest the vast number of books which the sayings of Christ would fill, if recorded ?

Another example is this : “It is said of our Saviour, on a certain occasion, that in going into his own country, ‘he could there do no mighty works.’ No one will pretend that this was a natural inability—that the Saviour lacked energy or capacity.” Certainly not. It is not necessary to pretend that there was inability at all. Mr. D. himself explains the matter sufficiently, “but such was the unbelief of the people, that it did not comport with the plan of God’s gracious dealing with men, for him, under such circumstances, to exert his power.”

Again : “He also prayed, ‘*If it be possible*, let this cup

pass from me. The impossibility in the case was wholly of a moral nature." To this we make a similar reply. The terms do not always import real impossibility. The Saviour may have meant, if it will comport with the design of my mission—with the plan of salvation. But if there was impossibility in the case, it was natural. It can be traced to the perfections of Jehovah, and the immutability of his nature; it being contrary to the nature of God not to do what he has absolutely purposed.

"Of the same description," says Mr. D., "is the inability under which God represents himself to have laboured. 'Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind *could not* be toward this people.' 'The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, *I cannot* away with.' And thus we say a holy God *cannot* do an unholy thing—a just God *cannot* do an unjust thing—a faithful God *cannot* lie.'" The explanation of all these examples has already been furnished. We will only add, that if the inability which arises out of the natural constitution be a natural inability, Jehovah is subject to a natural inability to lie. We might as well say that it is a matter of volition whether he continue to exist, as whether he will contradict his own attributes. It is from a necessity of nature that he is holy, and *cannot* do what is unholy.

Mr. D. continues, "Of the same nature is the inability to sin which is predicated of those who are born again. 'Whosoever,' says the Apostle John, 'is born of God, doth not commit sin, his seed remaineth in him; and he *cannot* sin, because he is born of God.' " Whatever may be the critical meaning of this text, it fails to answer Mr. D.'s purpose. He thus comments upon it: "It is *morally impossible* that the believer should deliberately and wilfully, or habitually sin against God, and yet no one will pretend that he has not *ability* to do so." It seems, then, according to his own interpretation, that the moral impossibility

is not a real one, since he supposes that "no one will pretend that the believer *has not ability* to sin against God," unless indeed a real possibility and a real impossibility are the same. The truth is this: if there is an impossibility in the case, which we neither affirm nor deny, it is as much natural as moral. It is traceable to the constitution of human nature as acted upon by religious influence.

Among the Scriptural proofs brought forward by Dr. Beecher, are several of the passages already considered. Although there are slight characteristic differences in the manner in which they are presented, they proceed, in both cases, on the same principles, and one answer is sufficient. We shall therefore confine ourselves to the additional examples presented by Dr. Beecher:—

• "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?" On this text he remarks, "It was the cup of suffering and ignominy; and he meant not whether they could feel pain and persecution, and shame, (for he told them that they should,) but whether they were willing, and believed that they should continue willing, to suffer with him—'Can ye?' that is, are you, and shall you be willing?" It is very easy to refute a man when he first refutes himself. We can show by Dr. B.'s own explanation, that the Saviour had no reference to ability whatever, although he uses the word "can." He says, "he meant *not* whether *they could* feel pain, and persecution, and shame, (for he told them that they *should*,) but whether they were *willing*." Of course this text fails to prove two kinds of ability, since the Saviour has no reference to ability.

"'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;' that is, thou canst do it, if thou art willing—implying, as in the case before, that he could not cleanse him, if unwilling, calling unwillingness inability." To this we answer, the text does not assert inability—but, on the contrary, ability. The sense is, plainly, "Thou *canst* make me

clean." It therefore furnishes no proof of inability of any kind. But does not the expression, "if thou wilt," imply "that he could not cleanse him if unwilling?" No. It is a very common form of expression to affirm entire ability, whether there be willingness or unwillingness. An individual is asked to confer a favour. He replies, for the purpose of refusing merely, "I cannot," knowing at the same time that it is in his power. It is instantly rejoined, "You can, if you will." In this rejoinder there is no intention whatever of implying that unwillingness constitutes inability. The meaning intended is, simply, *you can*. It is intended to affirm the ability of the individual, in opposition to his declaration of inability. The form of expression may not be strictly accurate; and it is worthy of notice, that it is not the language of an inspired man, but of the leper who came to Jesus Christ. To build an important metaphysical distinction, intended to sustain a whole system of theology, on such an expression, is not to build upon a rock, but on the sand. It is like placing the world on the back of the elephant, and the elephant on the back of the tortoise, and the tortoise upon—nothing! Besides, we have shown that if unwillingness constitutes inability, the inability is natural. It arises out of the constitution of our nature.

"This is a hard saying—who can hear it?" We are under no necessity of inferring inability from this text. Dr. B. says himself, "This means not that a sinner *has no power* to hear the humbling doctrine of depravity; but, who, as we say, can bear it, that is, *be willing*—be pleased with it;" we shall only add, that the process by which a real inability is proved, in this case, will prove that ability natural.

"Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils." The apostle, when he penned these words was cautioning the Corinthians against idolatry; and the

most probable meaning of them is, Ye cannot, *at the same time*, be Christians and idolaters. If this is the correct interpretation, the inability asserted is natural. It is as impossible as that a man should be in two places at the same time. However, it is not necessary to enter critically into the meaning of the text, to show that it furnishes no proof of the distinction. The doctor's own comment refutes him. He considers the inability to be wholly moral. He says, "The natural ability of man qualifies him to sit at either table." It is to be observed, that the apostle does not affirm an inability to sit at "either" table, but at *both* tables. He does not say, "Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord, *or* the cup of devils;—ye cannot make your choice; "but "Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord *and* the cup of devils." So the doctor himself presents it in the next clause: "but, while he prefers the table of the Lord, he cannot prefer the table of devils." It seems, then, that, in the estimation of Dr. B., a man has a natural ability to prefer two things to each other, at the same time; and that the sole reason why he does not is, that he is unwilling—and this is the moral inability. Wonderful philosophy! Who cannot perceive that it is as naturally impossible for a man to prefer two things to each other at the same time, as it is to exist and not exist at the same time. The inability which the apostle here asserts is therefore strictly natural.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It is a strange thing to find this text brought forward to prove that man has a natural ability to keep the law of God, and that he is merely unwilling. By a reference to the second chapter it will be seen that it furnishes decisive proof to the contrary. But let us see the doctor's own reasoning upon it. He says, "If this means a natural inability, how does regeneration help the matter, as it includes the

creation of no new natural powers or faculties?" Here is the absurdity again, of identifying ability with constitutional powers or faculties. The doctor is at a loss to know, if it be a natural ability, how regeneration will help the matter, since it imparts no new natural powers or faculties? We think we can tell him in a few words. It helps the matter, not by creating new powers or faculties, but by imparting new power to the powers or faculties already possessed. It helps the matter, by changing the mind from "carnal" to "spiritual." He proceeds: "But if it means that the carnal mind is one, which, by its friendship for the world, is at enmity with God, then it is plain that the mind which prefers the creature to God, cannot at the same time prefer God to the creature, though the hinderance is not natural, but the inability of the will—a moral inability." He seems determined to make the public believe, that a man has a natural ability to prefer two things opposite to each other at the same time; that the only reason why he does not "prefer the creature to God" and "at the same time prefer God to the creature" is, he *will not*. Against an absurdity like this I know of no argument; and I am not disposed to wield against its learned author the shafts of ridicule.

Again: "And Joshua said, Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God." And how are these words to prove the existence of two kinds of inability? "The people understood him to say, that they had no moral ability—no heart to serve him, because they were so sinful." But they replied, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord; we have the ability, because we have the will."

This is the most gratuitous interpretation that could be imagined, as will appear on examining the whole passage. It reduces the solemn address of Joshua, and the equally solemn response of the people, to a mere dispute; Joshua affirming that they have "no moral ability, no heart to serve

God," and they replying that they have. But how does Dr. B., or any other man, know that the people understood Joshua to say, "that they had no moral ability to serve" God? How does he know that they did not understand him to say they had no natural ability?

It cannot be inferred from the reply, because it would be equally applicable on either supposition. Whether Joshua meant natural or moral inability, the people are represented by the doctor as flatly contradicting him.

The true meaning of this text may be determined by a reference to the context. The Israelites were predisposed to idolatry. Joshua exhorts them thus: "Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord." He then calls upon them to decide immediately whether they will serve God or not. "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The people replied, "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods." They then recount his acts of mercy and of power in their behalf as a people, and conclude "therefore will we also serve the Lord, for he is our God." Joshua then said, "Ye cannot serve the Lord." He neither intended to assert inability, nor unwillingness, simply, to serve the Lord, but the impossibility of their serving the Lord, and idols at the same time. The reason which he assigns why they cannot serve the Lord, is not their supposed unwillingness, but that "he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then will he turn and do you hurt,

and consume you, after that he hath done you good." Then the people answered, "Nay; but we will serve the Lord;"—not meaning "we have the moral ability," in opposition to Joshua's supposed assertion that they had not; but meaning that they would prefer the service of God to the service of idols,—that they would serve God alone. This was the decision to which Joshua urged them, when he said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." The verses following confirm this explanation:—"And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now, therefore," adds Joshua, "put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel." It is plain, therefore, that the people did not understand Joshua as asserting their unwillingness to serve God; but their inability to serve God and idols at the same time, which was certainly a natural inability; and the words, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord," record their selection. They chose the Lord, and Joshua leads them to ratify the choice by a solemn covenant.

"How can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God?" That is, how can you believe who prefer the praise of man more than the praise of God; who voluntarily set at naught Jesus Christ?" This is intended, of course, for another example of moral inability, in opposition to natural. Whether it answers the design or not, will depend on whether a man has a natural ability to perform two mental exercises, entirely opposite in their character, at the same time. We apprehend that he has not; and that the inability is therefore natural.

"The natural man cannot know the things of the kingdom of God." To this text the doctor appends the following questions and the answer:—"But why can he

not?—what hinders?”—thus insinuating that this is another example of inability, consisting in unwillingness. Ans. ‘If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the hearts of them that believe not.’ ‘No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him;’ i. e. by his hearing and being taught of God; making the reading, and especially the preaching of his word, the means of his effectual calling by his Spirit.” The reader will at once perceive that this answer is highly Calvinistic. The natural man cannot know these things because he is lost, and the gospel is hid from him; and the Father has not seen proper to “draw him”—to give him the “effectual calling;” so that the natural ability of the sinner is an ability which exists in the absence of the indispensable means.

We think we can answer the questions in a different manner, and quite as perspicuously. The natural man cannot know these things “because they are spiritually discerned,”—because they can be known only by the spiritual man, and he is natural. They can be discerned from one position only, and he occupies another. They can be seen only from a high and commanding elevation, and he refuses to ascend it. His inability is, therefore, just as much natural as is Dr. B.’s inability to see New-York from Cincinnati. Whether the natural man can become spiritual or not—and whence the ability to become spiritual is derived—are other questions.

This is his last Scripture example. He advertises his readers in the next paragraph, that thousands might be added. If among the reserved thousands there are none more relevant than those presented, he has done well to keep them back, thereby saving time, labour, and expense. But if there be one in his prodigious list which bears conclusively on this point, we would be glad to see it;—perhaps it may yet be furnished.

He next undertakes to make it appear that this distinction is recognised, not only by the Scriptures, but by mankind in general, in all the varieties of social intercourse, "from the familiarity of conversational and business dialect, up to the most laboured efforts of argument and eloquence." For this purpose, he presents a number of "examples from writers of eminence." Some of them we will examine.

Edwards is first introduced:—"To give some instances of this moral inability, a woman of great chastity and honour may have a moral inability to prostitute herself to her slave." So she may, and a natural inability likewise. It is contrary to the nature of things, that a woman should sustain such opposite characters at the same time. But she may cease to be "a woman of great honour and chastity," and then there may be no inability, either natural or moral.

"A child of great love and duty may be unable to be willing to kill his father." Certainly, and the inability is strictly natural. He must cease to be "a child of great love and duty," and then he may be able to "be willing to kill his father." The faculties immediately employed in willing are just as much natural as those employed in executing the volitions of the mind.

"A drunkard, under such and such circumstances, may be unable to forbear taking strong drink." Perhaps he may, and the inability may be natural, originating in the human constitution as enfeebled by drunkenness, and acted upon by "such and such circumstances."

"A very malicious man may be unable to exert benevolent acts to an enemy, or to desire his prosperity; yea, some may be so under the power of a vile disposition that they may be unable to love those who are most worthy of their esteem and affection." And whence the inability? Has it not its origin in the constitution of

things—in the natural impossibility of sustaining two diametrically opposite characters at the same time—of being both malicious and benevolent at the same time toward the same object? It is therefore a natural inability. Whether the man may cease to be malicious, and escape from the power of a vile disposition, is another question. We believe, that, through the grace of God, he may, and then the inability will cease.

“A strong habit of virtue, and a great degree of holiness, may cause a moral inability to love wickedness in general, may render a man unable to take complacency in wicked persons or things; or to choose a wicked life, and prefer it to a virtuous life.” That is, as I understand it, while a man has “a strong habit of virtue, and a great degree of holiness,” he cannot “love wickedness in general,” nor “take complacency in wicked persons or things,” nor “choose a wicked life in preference to a virtuous life.” Certainly not; because to do these things would imply that he had no holiness at all, and a strong habit of vice. The inability in this case is like that which stands in the way of his existing and *not* existing at the same time. It is another question, whether he may suffer his “strong habit of virtue and great degree of holiness” to be impaired and destroyed, and then “love wickedness in general,” &c.

“And on the other hand, a great degree of habitual wickedness may lay a man under an inability to love and choose holiness, and render him utterly unable to love an infinitely holy being, or to choose and cleave to him as his chief good.” But what does the natural ability of a man “to love and choose holiness” amount to, when from some cause, or causes, he is not only “laid under an inability,” but is “utterly unable?” It is evidently *no* ability. The example sufficiently refutes itself. It is, however, the doctrine of Methodism, that while man, in consequence of

depravity, has not naturally the ability "to love God and choose holiness," the grace of God is given to counteract that depravity, so that he may be enabled to perform, at any time, the first of the series of acts which leads on, with greater or less rapidity, to ultimate holiness; and likewise to assist him in the performance of each successive act; and that this grace is given to every man.

Buck is next brought forward. It is the more important to notice his examples, as his Dictionary, in which they are found, has a very extensive circulation. Examples of natural and moral inability are placed in opposite columns.

With reference to those intended to illustrate natural inability, there can be no dispute. They are what they profess to be.

"Cain *could not* have killed Abel, if Cain had been the weakest, and Abel aware of him.

"Jacob *could not* rejoice in Joseph's exaltation before he heard of it.

"The woman mentioned in 2 Kings vi, 29, *could not* kill her neighbour's son and eat him, when he was hid, and she could not find him.

"Hazeal *could not* have smothered Benhadad, if he had not been suffered to enter his chamber."

The examples of moral, as distinguished from natural inability, are, however, somewhat doubtful.

"Cain could not have killed Abel, if Cain had feared God and loved his brother." That is, as we suppose, *while* he feared God and loved his brother. We readily assent to this; but the inability is natural; just as much so as "if Cain had been the weakest, and Abel aware of him." This example is of the same class as those from Edwards. It arises out of man's constitutional inability to entertain and manifest directly opposite dispositions and feelings, toward the same object, at the same time. It was natu-

rally impossible that Cain should fear God and love his brother, and be regardless of God, and hate and murder his brother, at the same moment.

“Potiphar’s wife *could not* rejoice in it (Joseph’s exaltation) while she continued under it.” Why? What reason can be assigned for this assertion? How does this prove the distinction? The illustration is too brief to be intelligible, and we will let it go for what it is worth.

“Had that woman (mentioned in 2 Kings, &c.) been a very affectionate mother, she could not have killed her son in a time of plenty, as she did in a time of famine.” Very well! And why could she not as easily have killed her son in a time of plenty? Because the act would have been malignant and murderous. And is it not as much a natural impossibility that “a very affectionate mother” should be, at the same time, actuated by cruel and murderous dispositions toward her offspring, as that she should be a mother and *not* a mother at the same time? The inability in the case is therefore natural. It is true, she might have ceased to be a very affectionate mother, and become a hard hearted and cruel one, and then the inability would have been removed.

“If a dutiful and affectionate son had been waiting on Benhadad in Hazael’s stead, he could not have smothered him, as Hazael did.” Why not? Evidently on account of the natural impossibility of an affectionate son’s being at the same time actuated by murderous dispositions toward his father.

He then proceeds to quote Lord Bacon, Dr. Johnson, Shakspeare, Burke, Hon. Daniel Webster, Alexander Hamilton, and Judge Story. It is remarkable, however, that in none of the quotations, although most of these authors are quite modern, is this distinction named or referred to. Its advocates have not been able, with all their ingenuity, and learning, to force it into the

current of general literature. The proof which these examples furnish is precisely similar to that furnished by the Scriptures. They use the term *cannot* when there is obviously no inability. Dr. B. concludes that they must surely mean inability, because they say *cannot*; and infers that, inasmuch as there *is* ability to do the things with respect to which inability is predicated, there must, therefore, be *two kinds* of inability.

Some of these examples are not only irrelevant, but also quite unfortunate for the distinction they are intended to establish. Take the one from Dr. Johnson, introduced as bringing natural and moral inability together in one sentence. "There never *can* be wanting some who will consider that a whole life cannot be spent on syntax and etymology, and that even a whole life *would not* be sufficient." It would be exceedingly difficult, we apprehend, for any but a New School Calvinist to perceive the slightest trace of the distinction in this passage. The meaning of it appears to be simply this:—There will always be some who will consider that a whole life cannot conveniently or reasonably be spent on syntax and etymology, and that if a whole life could be so spent, it would be insufficient. But how would it read on Dr. B.'s plan of interpretation? Here, however, we are at a loss; for he has furnished no satisfactory marks by which we may ascertain where he locates the natural, and where the moral inability. If he intends the terms "never can" and "cannot" to represent the natural, and the terms "would not" the moral inability, the sense is ridiculous. Try it:—"It is naturally impossible that there should be wanting some, who will consider that it is naturally impossible that a whole life should be spent on syntax and etymology, and that even a whole life is morally unable, unwilling to be sufficient." Indeed, construe the passage

as you may, according to the doctrines it is brought forward to establish, and it is perfect nonsense.

Equally inappropriate is the following quotation from Mr. Webster :—" In the very nature of things, a charter *cannot* be forced upon any body ; no one *can* be compelled to accept a grant."—This is intended as an example of moral inability. It is very plain, that Mr. W. did not intend to assert inability to force a charter, &c. ; but that the thing could not be done consistently, reasonably, lawfully ; and the inability to do an unlawful thing lawfully, is, to all intents and purposes, a natural inability. No man can do it, let him will ever so resolutely. But let us suppose that Mr. W. intended to affirm a moral, in contradistinction to a natural inability, and we must understand him as saying, " In the very nature of things, a charter *will not* be forced upon any body ; no one *will be* compelled to accept a grant." Thus the passage is changed from its argumentative character into a prophetic declaration that no such event will ever occur.

The passage from Shakspeare is eminently unfortunate :

" Pray, I cannot.—

Though inclination be as sharp as 'twill,
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand and pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect.

But O what form of prayer
Can serve my turn ? Forgive me my foul murder !
That cannot be ; since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder ;
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen."

Hamlet, scene ii, act 3.

The dramatic personage is represented as saying that he "*cannot pray*." Is this a natural or moral inability ? The New School doctrine is, that every man has a natural

ability to do what God requires of him, and that his inability is wholly moral—consisting in want of will. It is to sustain this distinction and doctrine, that the poet is quoted. But, most unhappily, he represents his hero as unable to pray, notwithstanding he has the moral ability, "Though inclination be as sharp as 'twill." He has a "strong intent," but his stronger guilt defeats it.

Thus, in our judgment, do all these examples signally fail to support this distinction. It derives its plausibility, chiefly, from varied, cautious, and unfair modes of statement.

Having corrected Dr. B. on this point, let us now notice an instance by Mr. Barnes. He says, in his "Defence," p. 153, "There are two kinds of inability—one arising from want of physical powers, the other from a want of inclination or will. The inability of a man to remove a mountain is one thing, and an inability to do right, arising from a strong love of sin, is another." Now this looks very plausible, but it is fallacious. It is, ostensibly, based on the well-known distribution of human faculties into physical or corporeal, intellectual and moral, and the corresponding and similar distinction of the power by which these classes of faculties are respectively exercised. But, according to this distinction, there are three kinds of power. Mr. B. does not say, "there are two kinds of inability, the one arising from the want of natural ability, the other from the want of moral ability," although such is his meaning. He uses the word *physical* instead of *natural*. Now this word is ambiguous. It is defined by lexicographers, and used by writers, to signify sometimes what is material, in opposition to what is intellectual or moral; and sometimes whatever is natural or constitutional. The advantage which Mr. B. gains by substituting "physicall" for natural, is this—if we deny the distinction of physical and moral ability, he can take

the word physical in the sense of material or corporeal, and thus place us in the position of denying what we do not intend to deny, and can confront us with authorities. We must admit "that the inability to remove a mountain is one thing, and the inability" to compose an oration, or "to do right, arising from a strong love of sin, is another." When this point is gained, he can change the sense of the word "physical" from corporeal, to constitutional or natural, and claim to have established the distinction of natural and moral ability. But the sophistry of all this has been sufficiently exposed. While there is a real distinction between corporeal power and moral power, between the power to lift a weight, or "remove a mountain," and the power to will to obey God, there is not a distinction between natural and moral power; or if there is a difference, it is merely that which exists between genus and species—between *bird* and *eagle*. The natural ability may not be moral, but it does not follow that the moral ability is not natural. Its advocates find it necessary to keep up a constant ambiguity of language. The terms *power*, *physical*, *natural*, *moral*, *can*, *cannot*, are all used ambiguously. It is not to be denied that the latter term is often used figuratively; but this causes no ambiguity—no embarrassment. Its meaning is easily determined by its connection. It is so frequently used, in all its modes of application, in the most common intercourse of life, that the most ignorant are in no danger of misunderstanding it. It is only when employed in conveying the most important instructions—the instructions of the gospel, that it gives an uncertain sound. The advocates of New Divinity have undertaken to make it sustain two opposite meanings at the same time. For instance—when it is used figuratively, they construe it to mean unwillingness, in contradistinction to inability. Thus far all is right. But, in order to make out two kinds of ability, they con-

strue it at the same time to mean a real inability. To this we must be permitted to object.

And while the philosophy of Shakspeare (whom Dr. Beecher describes as being "as noted for using language as men in every situation use it, as he is for delineation of character") exhibits so little affinity to that of New School Calvinism, it is remarkable how it harmonizes with the representations of the apostle. So far from identifying will and ability, Paul describes men as unable to do what they are strongly inclined, and make repeated efforts to do. In Rom. vii, he writes:—"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do *I allow not*: for what *I would* that I do not; but what I hate that I do." "For *to will* is present with me; but how to *perform* that which is good I find not. For the good that *I would* I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." "I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, *who shall deliver me* from the body of this death?" But if we may be unable to do the things which we are willing and endeavour to do; it is plain, that willingness does not constitute ability to do them,—that will and ability are not the same; unless we may be able to do that which we are unable to do. The disagreement between the apostle and these modern theorists is irreconcilable. They teach that all men have a natural ability to do what God requires, and all that is necessary to secure their obedience is the will, which constitutes the moral ability; from which it follows that so soon as a man becomes willing he is fully able—he had the natural ability before, he has the moral ability now. The apostle most unequivocally

teaches that men may be willing and yet unable, and wretched on account of that inability, and wholly dependant on a deliverer to supply the necessary power. He therefore completely explodes the distinction of natural and moral ability.

We conclude our argument with the following additional objection:—If God requires sinners to be willing to serve him—if to be willing, is to be able, and to be unwilling, is to be unable—and if the sinner has a natural ability to do what is required, the sage conclusion inevitably results, that the sinner has a *natural ability to be able* to serve God.

Indeed, so perfectly trifling is this distinction, that it would be matter of astonishment that men of understanding, much more of learning, should advocate or countenance it, were it not for its importance in seeming to reconcile a free salvation with Calvinism. It is a mere hypothesis for the solution of a theological difficulty.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

THE difficulties by which this distinction is encumbered, have brought it into disfavour with some of the leading writers of this school, who have surrendered it. They have not surrendered the *doctrines* founded upon it, but merely the *terms* by which they are represented. They object to any language in prayer or direct instruction, which asserts or implies that man is subject to inability to comply with all the terms of salvation. They perceive that the same end is secured by asserting a disinclination, or want of will, merely, which is supposed to hinder the repentance of the sinner as effectually as if he were ab-

solutely unable ; and the removal of which depends on the influences of the Spirit. Indeed, the distinction itself could be of no particular service to Calvinism at any time, except as it may serve to prevent alarm at the doctrine of the sinner's ability without grace. It is more than probable that when it was introduced, any theory which affirms the ability of the unregenerate, without some neutralizing qualification, would have been rejected at once by the great body of Calvinists. But the doctrine of a moral inability, which nothing but electing grace could remedy, would so chime in with the orthodoxy of the times, as to make way for its Pelagian spouse—the doctrine of a natural ability.

Among those who are disposed to proclaim a divorce between this long wedded but somewhat quarrelsome pair, we find Mr. Hinton. He says, "The appropriateness and expediency of the term *moral inability* to denote a wrong disposition is highly questionable. It satisfied the disputants of past days ; but, at the time, it rather concealed than exhibited the truth contended for, and ever since it has rather occasioned perplexity than facilitated inquiry. The existence of *inability* on the part of sinners was the main position which the opposing divines had maintained ; and the adoption of the phrase in question, permitted them to continue to maintain it. Its being qualified by the term *moral* was of little consequence ; still, they said, *you allow inability to exist, and whether natural or moral makes no difference, IT IS INABILITY.*"—p. 295.

Mr. H. is, however, careful to make it appear that, in giving up the *moral inability*, he only abandons the phraseology. He holds, most tenaciously, to an indisposition, on the part of the sinner, to serve God, which renders the influences of the Spirit absolutely necessary ; that these influences are vouchsafed to some and not to others ; and that the moral differences among men, in view of which some are saved and others damned, are made by God him-

self. One or two brief examples will suffice to justify our affirmation. He says:—"What has been hitherto advanced may be thus briefly summed up. The influence of the Holy Spirit is ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY to conversion, and CERTAINLY EFFECTUAL to it. These are sentiments of great glory and deep importance."—p. 76. What he means by "certainly effectual" is explained at the commencement of the chapter:—"By this language we mean that whensoever the Spirit begins to operate upon the heart of a sinner for his conversion, he invariably accomplishes the work. He never suspends his interference until the work is achieved; nor are there any cases in which his influence is ineffectual to its attainment."—p. 68. The meaning of this is too plain for misapprehension; and the inference is too obvious for dispute, that if a sinner is not converted, it is because the Spirit of God never began to operate on the heart of that sinner for his conversion, although such operations are absolutely necessary.

The first article in the *American Biblical Repository* for January 1839, entitled, "Introductory observations," contains an elaborate statement of doctrines professedly copied from the correspondence between Drs. Woods and Beecher, in 1832, as published in the "*Spirit of the Pilgrims*," vol. v, p. 496, seq. "In the statement," it is said, "the two distinguished and enlightened divines above named express their cordial agreement. They also express it as their united opinion 'that, with few exceptions, the ministers of the orthodox Congregational Church in New-England, together with most, if not all the Presbyterian ministers throughout the United States, will give their full assent to this statement.' They also regard it as 'a solid basis of ministerial fellowship and co-operation.'"

In the articles on "REGENERATION" and "ELECTION" we have the following sentiments:—

"The dependance of man, as a sinner, on the Holy Spi-

rit, is so real, universal, and absolute, that no human being ever was, or ever will be saved without special grace. 'The natural ability which avails to create obligation, and to bring on the disobedient a just condemnation, never avails, neither alone or by any power of truth or help of man, to recover a sinner from alienation to evangelical obedience, *because of the inflexible bias of his will to evil.*'

Again: "An obstinate will demands as really and certainly the interposition of special influence, as if the inability were natural, though the difference in respect to obligation and guilt and deserved punishment is infinite."

Again: "But this persuasion of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling is not the moral suasion of man's exerting, or sufficient grace of God's giving, whose efficacy depends on the will of the sinner, and not on the energetic and transforming influence of the Holy Spirit, 'as the Pelagians do vainly talk;' nor is it of a kind which, when exerted, the sinner by his free will ever does resist; but it is manifestly an operation supernatural, at the same time most powerful and most sweet, wonderful, secret, and ineffable in its power, according to the Scripture, not less than or inferior to creation, or the resurrection of the dead: so that all those in whose hearts God works in this admirable manner are certainly, infallibly, and efficaciously regenerated, and in fact believe."

Again: "All the subjects of God's special renewing grace are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love, to the praise of the glory of his grace; not on principles of law as meriting this favour, and not on the ground of repentance, faith, or good works foreseen."—p. 13.

We are here instructed, that such is the dependance of the sinner on the special grace of God, that no man ever was, or ever will be, saved without it: that natural ability,

although it avails to create obligation and justify punishment, never did, and never will, avail to repentance; that the difficulty in the way of the sinner's conversion "demands as really and certainly the interposition of the Holy Spirit as if the inability were natural;" that the exertion of the saving influence "does not depend on the will of the sinner," nor does the free will of the sinner ever resist it when exerted; but all those on whose hearts it operates "are certainly, infallibly, and efficaciously regenerated, and in fact believe:" and that all the subjects of this influence were chosen to be the subjects of it before the foundation of the world, and "not on the ground of repentance, or faith, or good works foreseen." Of course, if any are not regenerated, it is not because they have resisted the influences of the Spirit, which are absolutely necessary to salvation; but because those influences were never brought to bear upon them—because they were not chosen to this distinction from all eternity. We hope the authors and advocates of this creed will hereafter pay some regard to consistency, and not charge upon the will of the sinner the fact that he is not regenerated.*

* The writer or writers of this article profess to consider these doctrines among the "principal fundamental doctrines on which it is supposed all Christians are substantially agreed." This is truly astonishing. There has lately been (as the reader has already been informed) a considerable clamour raised by certain sanguine, but somewhat disappointed sectarists, against sectarianism. The sentiment has been inculcated that public religious instruction should be confined to tenets in which all Christians are agreed. Those in which they differ have been styled "sectarian Christianity," in contradistinction to "substantial Christianity." The promulgators of this sentiment have been very shy about stating the doctrines in which it is supposed all Christians are agreed; for they are not without the sagacity to perceive that if they undertake this, and do it fairly, they will exclude from public teaching many important doc-

But this doctrine of moral inability or disinclination, remediable only by the special and partially vouchsafed influences of the Spirit, is not the only security for the Calvinism of the New School. The definitions which are

trines, or deny to large sects the right to be called Christians.—Occasionally, however, we have sermons and statements put forth, containing, professedly, nothing but what all Christians can unite in. The Rev. Dr. Skinner, who is terrible in his philippics against sectarianism, has recently published a book of sermons, of considerable merit, entitled "Religion of the Bible." In his preface he says, "It is earnestly hoped that, in perusing this book, he [the reader] will not once find his thoughts conversant with a subject which he himself will regard as a matter of doubtful disputation, or as among the uncertainties of religion, or as pertaining to those peculiarities, whether of doctrine, practice, or spirit, which have given Christians different names, and have divided them into contending schools and sects." Some of his friends, relying, we suppose, on his word, have echoed this eulogy. We read the book with eagerness, not a little anxious to see whether he could keep clear of disputed points; and were not disappointed in finding doctrines eminently Calvinistic—such as are disputed and rejected by the great body of Arminian Christians. He affirms, and represents the Saviour as defending, the Calvinistic view respecting "God's sovereignty." It is fully developed in these words: "If God be influenced at all by what men themselves, in a moral respect, are or do, he would be influenced, not to save, but to destroy them," p. 320. Here is an explicit avowal of the sentiment, that God is not influenced at all, in saving men, by what they, in a moral respect, are or do; or, in other words, that he selects those whom he chooses to save from among the ungodly and impenitent, without any regard to repentance or faith foreseen, as a reason for their selection, while he rejects others, who, so far as moral character is concerned, are as eligible to salvation as those whom he determines to save. He closes this sermon by saying that, if there be any mystery in this doctrine, it is the mystery not of the subject, but of a perverse and unteachable heart."

The sermon on "Restraints on Divine Influence" is eminently warlike in its attitudes. If it does not discuss disputed doctrines, it deals out censures unsparingly on "schools and sects," on "minis-

given of the ability which the sinner is declared to possess are sufficient to preserve that system inviolate, without any other guardianship. Let them assert, with the utmost fulness of expression, that every sinner is fully

ters," "particular churches," and on "peculiarities of practice and spirit." He finds some ministers "under the sway of the spirit of sect," who would fain draw down fire from heaven to burn up those who do not fall in and build with them;" and others who, "labouring hard in angry controversy, suppose nothing to be a more worthy object of pursuit than the confutation of speculative errors on all points of divinity;" and others, ministers of evangelical denominations, who, although they are not found among the *open* opposers of revivals, are induced by "peculiar circumstances of expediency" to "repress positive expressions of aversion." Among churches he finds those who, "deeming no spirit so excellent as zeal for orthodoxy, are afraid of the influence of revivals on their standards of faith, and so hold them in suspicion, if not in worse esteem;" and "others" who, "on the contrary, overpowered by the spirit of party, long for nothing so much as an increase of numbers, and set themselves against true revivals by contrivances designed to awaken their assemblies into a great animal excitement, as a fruitful means of proselytism." It is certainly encouraging to think that there is one minister, and one church in the land, free from these unseemly characteristics.

Now we do not care to decide whether these censures are merited or not, nor do we object to this author's advancing his own peculiar doctrines, or wielding the lash of censure on the backs of ministers or churches that do not come up to his standard; but we object to his claiming to have advanced no doctrines but what all Christians believe, and arrogating to himself the credit of a liberality and freedom from sectarianism of which others are represented as so deplorably destitute.

What can all this mean? Are these great and learned men really ignorant of the fact that the doctrines they set forth as received by all Christians are warmly disputed among Christians? Or do they hope to spread Calvinism, by making the impression on the minds of those who know no better, that it is undisputed truth? Or do they deny the character of Christians to all who reject these doctrines?

able to comply, at any moment, with the claims of the gospel—let them argue vehemently in favour of the assertion—let them insist upon it that the opposite opinion represents Jehovah as a tyrant—let them, on this ground, offer salvation to all, and urge all to come to Christ, with all the eloquence of persuasion—let it be imagined, as it is by many of their hearers, that they are genuine Arminians, and that Calvinism is the object of their righteous abhorrence; and all this time Calvinism dwells securely, and smiles at the misapprehensions of the multitude. This ability consists in nothing more than the possession of constitutional faculties, which may be possessed in the absence of the power that is absolutely necessary to exercise them in the way required.

Mr. Hinton has adopted a definition of “power” different from the above, in the management of which he has shown not a little ingenuity. Instead of taking the term in its ordinary and strictly proper sense, he defines it to consist in “the possession of means.” He then gives such illustrations of his definition, as seem to make the possession of *means* equal to the possession of *power*. But when he comes to inquire what are the means necessary to salvation, he takes care to leave out of his enumeration something which he elsewhere assures us is *absolutely necessary*—the Holy Spirit’s influences. Hence, the ability which he ascribes to the sinner is, after all, an ability which is utterly and inevitably unavailing.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CALVINISM CONTINUED.

BESIDES these subtilties on ability, certain distinctions on the atonement have been resorted to, for the same purpose. There is so obvious an inconsistency in offering salvation to all, on the supposition that Christ did not die for all, that the man who ventures to connect these in the pulpit is more likely to excite contempt than to commend himself to the conscience. This is felt by Calvinists. Hence they distinguish between the *atonement* and the *application* of it—between *atonement* and *redemption*—between the *sufficiency* of the atonement and its *efficiency*.

Two or three examples may suffice. The first we shall select from Mr. Payne's Lectures on Divine Sovereignty, referred to at the commencement of our discussions. He affirms that "while, on the one hand, the Saviour cannot have intended to secure the salvation of all men by the act of offering himself up a sacrifice for sin; yet that the sacrifice must, on the one hand, have been in itself adequate to the salvation of all men, so as to become a suitable foundation for the general and unlimited calls of the gospel. There is a broad line of distinction between the sufficiency of the atonement of Christ and its efficiency, or rather, as I would say, the sovereign purpose of the sacred three, in reference to its efficiency; that is, in reference to the exertion of that holy influence upon the minds of men, which secures to them the enjoyment of the blessings which flow through the channel of the atonement. It may be true (whether it is or not we shall inquire presently, my present object is merely to illustrate the difference between the two things) that Jehovah did not intend to put forth that influence which would render the atonement the means of securing the salvation of all

men; though, as it was to become the basis of moral government, it was essential that it should be of infinite worth, and so in itself adequate to the salvation of all men. This I have long regarded as the true state of the case.”—p. 209.

Again, “If the question be ‘Did Christ die with the design of laying a foundation of salvation for *all* men, or for *some* men?’ I answer, that, in this sense, he died for all men. If the question be ‘Did he die with the design of rendering the means effectual to the salvation of all men, or of some men?’ I answer, that, in this sense, he died for some men only.”

“I believe in the unlimited, universal, infinite sufficiency of the atonement of Christ—I believe it was the intention of God, as the moral Governor, in giving his Son as a sacrifice for sin, to provide a general remedy commensurate with the disease. I believe, on the other hand, in the limited application of the atonement. I believe it was the intention of God, as a sovereign, to render the remedy effectual, by special and sovereign influence, in the case of certain individuals *only* who are affected with the general disease, so that the intention of God as a sovereign, and as a ruler, in reference to the atonement, is different, the one being general, the other particular.”—*Ibid.*

We have the sentiments of Dr. Cox, on this subject, in the appendix to his work on Quakerism. He remarks, “In modern technology (which I approve) they only are said to be redeemed who are actually accepted in Christ: for all, atonement is made; to all, it is offered; the Spirit striving through the truth as extensively as the sufficiency and applicability of the atonement are extensive. Still, to accept the offer and correspond with the offerer, is, in the very nature of things, the only way to be saved. Are all men saved? Yes—if all repent and believe the

gospel! Do they all this? He that believes men are saved *in sin*, or that all men renounce it, must have very strong faith! We, however, do not believe that the atonement was indefinite, in the sense of the Remonstrants of Holland, or any other Arminians. God had a design in making it, which no event could frustrate. Christ eternally designed the salvation of the elect; and for these, in this sense exclusively, he gave his precious life. But this makes not the atonement less full, or alters its nature at all.”—p. 667.

The reader will readily perceive, that, notwithstanding all that is said in these passages of a “full,” “unlimited,” “universal” atonement, the writers hold most tenaciously to the great Calvinistic principle, which limits the provision for salvation to a definite and favoured number. The atonement was adequate to the salvation of all men. It justifies the general and unlimited calls of the gospel. But it is not indefinite, in the sense in which *Arminians* understand it, which, we apprehend, is the sense in which it is generally understood. Christ eternally designed the salvation of the elect; and for them, in this sense exclusively, (in the sense of designing their salvation,) he gave his precious life. “The Saviour cannot have intended to secure the salvation of all men,” &c. “It was the intention of God to render the remedy effectual in the case of certain individuals *only*.” “The *atonement* was for *all*, but the *elect only* are said to be *redeemed*.”

It may serve to illustrate more vividly and impressively the effect of these distinctions, if we furnish an example of the manner in which they are applied,—first, for the purpose of preaching a free salvation, and secondly, for the purpose of securing the system of Calvinism.

In Mr. Barnes’ sermon, on “The Way of Salvation,” there is a most eloquent assertion of the doctrine, that salvation is free for, and sincerely offered to all. The

passage alluded to, is in the style of the most high-toned and uncompromising Arminianism. He writes :—

“The atonement was for all men. It was an offering made for the race. It had not respect so much to individuals, as to the law and perfections of God. It was an opening of the way for pardon—a making forgiveness consistent—a preserving of the truth—a magnifying of the law, and had no particular reference to any class of men. We judge that He died for all; He tasted death for every man. He is the propitiation for the sins of the world. He came, that whosoever would believe on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

“The full benefit of the atonement is offered to all men. In perfect sincerity God makes the offer. He has commissioned his servants to go and preach the gospel—that is, the good news that salvation is provided for them—to every creature. He that does not this; that goes to offer the gospel to a part only; to elect persons only; or, that supposes that God offers the gospel only to a certain portion of mankind, violates his commission, practically charges God with insincerity, makes himself ‘wise above what is written,’ and brings great reproach on the holy cause of redemption. The offer of salvation is not made by *man*, but by *God*. It is *his* commission; and it is *his* solemn charge, that the sincere offer of Heaven should be made to every creature. That all creatures have not heard it; that every heathen man, every Indian, African, and Islander, have not heard it, has been owing to the unfaithfulness of ministers—to the avarice of the church—to the want of proper zeal among Christians, and not to the command of God, or any want of fulness in the atonement.

“I assume the free and full offer of the gospel to all men, to be one of those cardinal points of the system by which I *guage* all my other views of truth. It is, in my

view, a corner stone of the whole edifice ; that which makes it so glorious to God, and so full of good will to men. I hold no doctrines, and, by the grace of God, never can hold any which will be in *my* view inconsistent with the free and full offer of the gospel to all men ; or which will bind my hands, or palsy my tongue, or freeze my heart, when I stand before sinners to tell them of a dying Saviour. I stand as the messenger of God, with the assurance, that all that *will* may be saved ; that the atonement was full and free ; and that if any perish, it will be because they choose to die, and not because they are straitened in God. I have no fellow-feeling for any other gospel ; I have no right hand of fellowship to extend to any scheme that does not say that God sincerely offers all the bliss of heaven to every wandering child of Adam,—be he a Caffrarian, a Hindoo, a man of China, or a Laplander ; a beggar or a king, a rich man, a learned man, a moral man, or an abandoned wretch of Christian climes.

“The scheme of salvation I regard as offered to the *world*, as free as the light of heaven, or the rains that burst upon the mountains, or the full swelling of broad rivers and streams, or the heavings of the deep. And though millions do not receive it—though in regard to them the benefits of the plan are lost, and to them, in a certain sense, the plan may be said to be in vain, yet I see in this the hand of the same God that pours the rays of noon-day on barren sands, and genial showers on desert rocks, and gives life, bubbling springs, and flowers, where no man is, to *our* eyes, yet not to *his*, in vain. So is the offer of eternal life, to every man here, to every man everywhere, sincere and full—an offer that, though it may produce no emotions in the sinner’s bosom *here*, would send a thrill of joy through all the panting bosoms of the suffering damned.”

Such is the manner in which this eloquent preacher

sometimes takes occasion to assert the fulness and freedom of the atonement, and the universality and sincerity of the gospel offers of eternal salvation. This passage, taken alone, is sufficient to make the heart of the Christian or the penitent leap within him. And who that is unacquainted with the turnings, and windings, and diversified subterfuges of New Divinity, would suppose, for a moment, that the author of these glowing paragraphs is a firm believer in the Calvinistic doctrine's respecting predestination and election? He not only affirms that salvation is provided for, and offered to, every creature, but denounces with great severity the opposite doctrines. If an Arminian were disposed to speak in terms severely condemnatory of Calvinism, it would be difficult for him to find language better suited to his purpose than that used by Mr. B. This sermon gave dissatisfaction to some of his brethren, as might have been expected, and he was put on the defence of his orthodoxy. Let us see how he proceeds. In his answer to the protest against his sermon, he makes the following explanations.

“In denying that it was in itself efficacious, it was meant to affirm that the atonement was something which could be contemplated apart from the purpose to apply it; that it had a dignity and value which could not be adequately measured by its actual application; that it was in its nature applicable to any number of men; *that if God had chosen to apply it to all the world, or to have greatly increased the number of the elect*, the Redeemer would not have been required to increase, renew, or prolong his sufferings. Its actual application to man was supposed to be the result of the good pleasure of God. It was supposed that there was a covenant transaction between the Father and the Son, assuring him that he should see of the travail of his soul, and should be satisfied, and that his people should be willing in the day of his power. It was *not* sup-

posed that the exact *amount* of this number was fixed by the nature of the atonement, but depended on the mercy and promise of God.

“To the Redeemer’s sufferings and death, contemplated apart from the actual purpose to apply his merits, I chose, in accordance with many writers, to apply the word *atonement*. The actual application of his work, I supposed, might be appropriately expressed by the word *redemption*. It was not thought that this was a departure from Scripture usage. The word *atonement* occurs but once as applicable to the death of Christ in the New Testament; the word *redemption* often, and this latter word it is supposed always with reference to the purpose to apply it. It did not seem then to be a gross violation of Scripture usage, to describe by the word atonement a thing which may and must be contemplated—the highest and best gift of God—the sufferer, the bleeding victim, the atoning sacrifice: still less can it be seen how this usage can be construed into an offence against the Confession of Faith. In all our standards of doctrine the word atonement never occurs. Nor is it the purpose of the standards to decide the *thing* which I wished to express by the word—the original independent applicability of the sufferings of Christ. The Confession of Faith, states only its *application*; for that it uses the word redemption. It affirms of that, that it is limited and was intended to be limited. That the sermon never denied.”—*Defence*, p. 69.

The whole secret of this matter is now laid open. The word atonement, it is said, occurs but once in the New Testament as applicable to the sufferings of Christ. It represents the original independent applicability of the sufferings of Christ. It was in its nature applicable to any number of men, and if God had chosen greatly to increase the number of the elect, no additional suffering on the part of Christ would have been requisite. But there is a distinction

between the atonement and the application of it. The atonement without the application is not adequate to the salvation of any one ; the application is absolutely necessary. It is the *redemption* which is in Christ Jesus ; and it would be infidelity itself to suppose that a sinner can be saved whom Christ has not redeemed. But the application of the atonement, or the redemption, is by no means coextensive with the atonement. It is determined by the good pleasure of God, and by a covenant transaction between the Father and the Son, in which the exact number to whom it is applied is fixed. It is limited to the elect. Mr. B. claims to agree with the Confession of Faith on this subject. The Confession of Faith says nothing about atonement, it states only its application. "*For that it uses the word redemption. It affirms of that, that it is limited, and was intended to be limited. That the sermon never denied.*"

This distinction, and the doctrine based upon it, are thus stated in his Introduction to Butler's Analogy. "But still there are two points in the atonement so well substantiated, and yet so apparently contradictory, that it becomes an interesting inquiry, whether *both* positions can find an analogy in the course of events. The first is, that the atonement was originally applicable to all men—that it was not limited by its nature to any class of men, or any particular individuals—that it was an offering made for the race, and is, when made, in the widest and fullest sense, the property of man ; and the second is, that it is actually applied to only a portion of the race, and that it was the purpose of God that it should be so applied."

He then attempts an analogy between these doctrines and the provisions of nature, in the course of which he remarks, "We defy the most acute defender of the doctrine of a limited atonement, to produce an instance in the provisions of God where there was a designed limitation of the thing." Again : "But still it was the purpose—the

decree of God, that this atonement should be actually applied to but a part—we believe ultimately a large part of the human family. By this we mean that it is *in fact* so applied, and that this fact is the expression of the purpose or decree of God."

Mr. B. here gives an example of the limitation which he so confidently denies. For if that provision is *not limited*, the benefits of which are applied, by the decree of God, to but a part of mankind, we have yet to ascertain the meaning of the term.

It is in immediate connection with the foregoing passage that he makes this remark, to which the attention of the reader has already been called. "We interpret the decrees of God, so far as we can do it, *by facts*; and we say that the actual *result*, by whatever means brought about, is the expression of the *design* of God." So that if any one is damned, the "*result*" proves that it was the "decree" or "design" of God, not only that the atonement should not be applied in his case, but that damnation should be his eternal lot, notwithstanding all that might be done, professedly, for his salvation.

From these quotations it appears that Mr. B. considers the full, free, and sincere offer of salvation—of all the bliss of heaven—to every creature perfectly compatible with the supposed fact that the atonement, the application of which is absolutely necessary to the salvation of a sinner, is applied to only a part of mankind, and that but a part of them are redeemed: so that while it would bind his hands, and palsy his tongue, and freeze his heart, to be required to believe and preach a limited atonement, his hands are perfectly free, and his tongue is as the pen of a ready writer, and his heart warm when he comes to preach a dying Saviour to sinners whom that Saviour never redeemed, to whom the atonement is destined by the decree of God never to be applied, whose damnation was decreed from

eternity, and who, consequently, have no more opportunity of salvation than the devils in hell.

We confess that if this be Mr. B.'s commission, we have not a very exalted opinion of it; and we must go elsewhere than to his theory for a satisfactory illustration of the sincerity of God.

Mr. B. anticipates an objection to his doctrine of limited redemption. "But it is still said that it is unreasonable for men to suffer in consequence of not being put in possession of the universal atonement; and that Christianity affirms there is no hope of salvation but in the Son of God. So it does. But the affirmation is not that men are guilty for not being acquainted with that scheme, but that they lie under the curses of the *antecedent state* before mentioned, from which Christianity came to deliver."—p. 45.

According to this, sinners are not condemned for failing to avail themselves of the provisions of salvation, but for the antecedent guilt which renders the means of salvation necessary.

It is remarkable, however, that this argument does not touch the question of the sincerity of God in offering salvation to those whose damnation he has decreed. It is designed to vindicate his justice in withholding what is absolutely necessary to salvation. We care not to dispute this point at present. Admitting, then, for argument's sake, that the justice of God is unimpeachable, we still ask, can he sincerely offer salvation to those from whom he withholds, in pursuance of his eternal decree, what is indispensable to their salvation? This is the point on which we would fix attention. Suppose that a large number of the subjects of an earthly sovereignty incur the penalty of death. Their sovereign feels the necessity of enforcing the claims of government, and yet is reluctant to cut off so many of his subjects. He devises a scheme by which he thinks the authority of government can be sustained, and

the rebels pardoned. This scheme is equally applicable to all ; but, as it is supposed that no injustice would be done to any by the execution of the penalty, he concludes to apply it to a certain number only, selecting the persons to be saved. So far, we allow, for the sake of argument, that all is right. But suppose that this sovereign were to commission his ministers to go and announce to these rebels the plan of mercy, and offer pardon to them indiscriminately, when it was his settled purpose, known to his messengers, that the scheme was intended to be made available only to a part of their number—suppose he were to hold those messengers punishable, as violaters of their commission, in case they should intimate that pardon was not equally the privilege of all—would that sovereign be lauded for his sincerity? Would that governor be deemed sincere who employs men to excite hopes of pardon in the breasts of criminals whom he has predetermined shall be executed? And yet this is the very course which New Divinity ascribes to the God of heaven. We would fain vindicate Him from the praise with which it dishonours him. We have no partiality for the Calvinism of the Westminster Confession of Faith, but we like it much better than New Divinity. It does not deceive by flourishes about a general atonement, while it holds to a limited redemption.

This distinction between the atonement and its application, apart from the use to which it is applied, is, in our estimation, wholly untenable. Suffering alone does not constitute atonement. It must be suffering for that particular purpose. It must be suffering applied. The idea of atonement includes, essentially, the idea of its application. If there are those to whom the sufferings of Christ are not applied for the purpose of atonement, there are those for whom no atonement is made, whatever may be the case as to the mere applicability of his sufferings.

Those who adhere to this distinction, will find themselves involved in this difficulty—either none of the great and varied blessings which are conferred on the ungodly, come to them through the atonement, or they receive those blessings in consequence of an atonement that has never been applied to them; or the atonement *is*, and is *not* applied to them, at the same time.

The state of the case is this—it is not the application of the atonement that is needed, to make the sinner a Christian, but the application of certain additional benefits procured by the atonement, the application of which depends upon our repentance and faith; such as pardon, adoption, and regenerating influences. The atonement itself is applied to all.

The distinction between atonement and redemption is also unwarrantable. Redemption includes the entire connection between the sufferings of Christ and our salvation. The great transactions of mercy which are represented by the word *atonement* are far more frequently represented by the word *redemption*. How, we ask, is atonement effected? By the sufferings of Christ. And are we not redeemed by the same means? “Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

The New School men are great sticklers for the doctrine of free agency. One might suppose, from the manner in which they assert and contend for it, that they were specially set for its defence. But the freedom they ascribe to man is merely nominal. It is just such freedom as they can reconcile with the eternal and unalterable foreordination of every action and event. It is true, there is much dispute between the parties in the Calvinistic churches respecting predestination; but the controversy relates to the *reasons* by which Jehovah was influenced

in his predeterminations, and to the *manner* in which he brings them to pass. That he has, for some reason, fore-ordained, and that in some way or other he brings to pass, every event, they alike believe.

The means by which they attempt to reconcile these hostile tenets, consist in plausible definitions of the terms employed. But no matter how plentifully they use the terms which convey the idea of freedom, or how they define them, the freedom of the human mind, according to their system, is nothing more than the freedom of the different parts of a complicated machine to act according to the plan on which it is constructed, and in obedience to the impulses of the steam, or water power, by which it is put in motion. Says Mr. Payne, "Upon the whole, I have no hesitation in saying, that the utmost freedom, which a man possesses, or can possess, is liberty to act as he chooses." We should consider this liberty enough for human beings, and a little too much, were we not also required to believe that every volition of the human mind is predetermined by God himself, and produced by means adapted and directed by him, to the production of the fore-appointed result.

So far as we are able to gather the New School philosophy of mental operations, and their connection with divine influence, from their theological writings, it appears to be this: the volitions are determined by the emotions, the emotions by the perceptions, the perceptions by surrounding circumstances, and the circumstances by God himself. When God would produce a certain class of actions, he surrounds the mind with the corresponding objects; these produce infallibly the required perceptions; the perceptions act upon the susceptibilities and produce the corresponding emotions; these cause the foreordained volitions; and the volitions are succeeded by the actions. In this way is God supposed to bring to pass both good and evil

actions. The world of mankind is thus reduced to a vast theatre of automata, consisting of corporeal machines, each including a spiritual machine. The internal machinery is acted upon by external influences, entering by certain avenues for that purpose. The internal puts the external machinery in motion. The great Author of nature acts as the wire-worker, who manages every movement. Sitting in the centre of his vast resources of influence, he touches one cord, and men go to work ploughing, sowing, reaping, making books, preaching sermons, or killing each other, as may be ordained. He touches another, and some sit in grave council on the affairs of the automaton community. He brings to bear another class of influences, and they proceed to dispute whether they are free or not, and to play off all the subtilties of theological controversy. This is the way in which, according to this theory, God is supposed to govern mind; and all these movements, we are assured, were predetermined by him before he originated this wonderful device.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CONCLUSION.

WHATEVER differences may exist between the Old and New School parties, it is certain that the latter have not given up Calvinism. They hold on to its fundamental principles. Their system is liable to all the objections which they bring against that of the Old School. It has the same Antinomian tendencies. All that is necessary to make them apparent, is to strip it of its inconsistent appendages. It furnishes the same encouragement to presumption and religious inactivity, by teaching that the elect were chosen to salvation before they were born; and that every thing necessary to their salvation was ordered as infallibly as the event itself. It renders the case of the non-elect equally hopeless, and extinguishes all motive for effort to obtain salvation, by the doctrine that God withholds from them influences which are absolutely necessary to their salvation. And when I hear the advocates of this system address the sinner in the language of severe warning and rebuke—when I hear them say to him, in the language of Mr. Barnes, “Go home this day, impenitent sinner, if God spares a rebel like you to get home—go home and reflect, that if you pass through this revival unmoved; if you resist all the appeals that are made to you from day to day, and week to week, the probability is, that you will be damned,” I am affected with indescribable emotions. If I were to address my feelings to the sinner, to whom the appeal is made, it would be in language like this: Sinner, if the preacher’s creed be true, you are elected to salvation from eternity, or excluded by the decree of Jehovah, from the covenant of redemption, and eternally consigned to misery. If the former, you

are safe : if the latter, there is no hope of salvation for you. Your passing this revival unmoved will be a matter of course. You need not permit yourself to be flattered into the persuasion that there is salvation for you. It is true, you will be saved *if you repent and believe*, but God has decreed to withhold from you the influences absolutely necessary to repentance and faith : and hence it is as certain as that God lives, that you never will repent and believe. You have, it is said, a natural ability ; but that consists in nothing more than the possession of your constitutional faculties, and it exists in connection with a moral inability or disinclination to obey God, which nothing but his special grace can remove, and that is given to none but the elect. You are told that Christ died for all—that he died for you, and that he offers salvation to you ; all this, however, can be of no avail, except to increase your damnation, unless that atonement be applied ; but its application is limited :—Christ has died for you, but he has not redeemed you. You are called free agents, and are blamed for your conduct, but He who has fixed beforehand your destiny has also decreed all your actions, so that you *have* done nothing, *will* do nothing, *can* do nothing, but what God has foreordained. I pity you ; and the more so as you are so insulted by those who, according to their own statements, serve God only as he *makes* them willing, and whom you would equal in every good thing, if God had only shown you equal favour.

And while this part of their creed developes such revolting tendencies, the doctrine of natural ability tends to destroy all sense of dependance on the Holy Spirit. We do not say that those who hold the doctrine of natural ability expunge from their creed the doctrine of the necessity of spiritual influence, but that these doctrines are contradictory. In proportion as the one is believed and acted upon, the influence of the other is neutralized. How can

a man feel dependant on God for that which is at any moment within the reach of his natural ability? This tendency of the doctrine of natural ability is evidently felt by its advocates. They sometimes endeavour to unite these two doctrines in their preaching; with what success may be illustrated by a reference to one of their own writers. In an article in the *Christian Spectator*, entitled "An Inquiry into the true Way of Preaching on Ability," we have the following:—

"It has been common, if not universal, for the orthodox pulpit of New-England, while insisting on man's natural ability, to announce it as an absolute certainty, that he never will obey, without a sovereign intervention of *special* grace. This, unquestionably, was correct: it was but to tell the truth, and truth of the highest importance. But what is the state of an attentive, convinced mind, under such instruction? convinced, at the same time, that it has natural power, and that, *left to itself*, it is as certain as its own existence, that it never will exert that power. Let such a mind, then, suppose itself *left to itself*; having nothing on which its hopes can rest but its natural power. Would it not, under that impression, be without all reason for exerting its power? and could any one reasonably expect that it would exert it?"*—Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 246.

* The author of this essay is the Rev. Dr. Skinner. We were not aware of this fact until the publication of his recent work, entitled, "Aids to Preaching and Hearing," in which this essay is republished, with slight alterations in the style. It was in this article that we found the objection to the Arminian views of ability, (noticed on page 64,) namely,—that it identifies divine and human agency. To this objection Dr. S. refers in his preface, a circumstance which shows that he considers it of great importance.

Had we known earlier the source of this article, we should have considered it entitled to more particular notice, as from the reputation and undoubted ability of its author, we may safely presume that it presents the most effective argument of which that side of the

What is this but a plain admission that one of these doctrines neutralizes the other, and that it is therefore necessary to keep back the one, while insisting on the other?

question is capable. Not that any of its arguments have been overlooked; but we would have considered it an advantage to be able to connect them with so distinguished a name.

But this essay, while it bears the impress of great talents, is a singularly contradictory production. In the first part the author maintains "that God unquestionably demands of every sinner an instantaneous conversion,—*a conversion begun and completed in the same moment, from sin to himself*," that "the Bible seems to know nothing of *gradual* conversions; though doubtless there are many instances of persons, who, after a period longer or shorter of *outward* reformatations, and internal *conflicts with the Spirit of grace*, are at length made willing to submit to God."—p. 210. Of the opposite doctrine he remarks, "Law, grace, holiness, God, and all eternal things, will, as a matter of course, be despised by the people, where preachers, in any way, or on any pretext whatever, give them a dispensation from strict duty, or consent to *any kind or degree of gradualism in conversion*."—p. 214. Exercises performed as conducing to conversion are reprobated on the ground that they are impenitent and sinful.—pp. 170, 171, 208. He deprecates the prevalence of the style of preaching which grows out of the theory to which he thus objects.

But he is not fully satisfied with the style of preaching to which his own principles lead. He gives as a specimen "'Repent, repent this very instant: we say not *try* to repent, or exercise thought in order to repent, but instantly repent.'" "Such a strain," he says, "has been so familiar, especially in seasons of revival, that I almost tremble to express a suspicion of its not being precisely correct."—p. 235. To this preaching, which is absurd enough, but perfectly consistent with the doctrine, that God demands of every sinner a conversion which must be "begun and completed in the same moment," and which consists, as he elsewhere expresses it, in an "indivisible act of the mind," he objects, that "*It allows no place for effort, preliminary to the very act of duty itself*."—p. 234. He contends that "the mind does not possess the power to put itself directly, or by a mere volition, into a repentant state."—p. 237. And

The doctrines of modern Calvinism do not constitute one harmonious scheme. It is a system (if a system it may be called) of contrary principles. It sets the gospel against the law, and the law against the gospel. Instead

in the next article on "How to repent," he remarks, "Repenting, or turning to God, is a state of mind which a man cannot bring himself into by one mere volition. He cannot repent simply by resolving or saying within himself, *I will repent*. That resolution may fix his mind on repenting, and be the *beginning of a series of mental acts and exercises which will result in his repentance*; but his repentance is not its immediate sequent, &c."—p. 256. If these are not contradictions, we know not the meaning of the term. He first denies that there is *any kind or degree of gradualism* in conversion, and insists that it must be *begun* and *completed* in the same moment; and then denies that conversion can be accomplished by one effort, and contends for *gradualism*, or a *series* of mental *acts and exercises* which will result in repentance, &c. He anticipates and refutes the very objections which he elsewhere brings against the doctrine of preliminary effort, as held by Arminians, so that Dr. S. in one part of his book refutes Dr. S. in another part.

Where, then, is now the difference between Dr. S. and Arminians? Has he come over entirely? Not yet. Although he admits of "efforts preliminary," he has his own opinion as to what exercises are admissible, and does not admit prayer among them. He objects to it on the ground that, unless it is "an exercise of holiness," or the act of one who already loves God, it is *sin*.—p. 24. The exercises for which he pleads are thus stated: "All I have stated is, that, in order to repent, the objects that work repentance in the mind must be thought of and considered."—p. 259. We would, however, suggest whether *thought* and *consideration*, unless they are "holy exercises," are not as certainly sinful as prayer. Does not the principle apply equally to prayer and to all other exercises? On what ground will it be maintained that prayer, in order to become holy is impenitent, and therefore sinful, while other acts, such as Dr. S. may choose to enjoin, are perfectly right, although they confessedly precede repentance, and are in order to it. It seems that Dr. S. has no objections to the sinner's performing acts as prerequisite to repentance, so that he performs those for which the doctor has a preference.

There is another point of difference between Dr. S. and Armi-

of blowing its "wind of doctrine" steadily from one point, it assails the church with contrary breezes, driving her first in one direction and then in another. When she sails too near the shore on one side, she must be blown off toward the other, so that she is kept constantly tacking. At one time it is important to preach the "doctrines of grace" as Calvinists understand them; then the church runs into Antinomianism. The doctrine of natural ability must next be preached as a corrective; then the church runs toward Pelagianism.

An exemplification of these remarks may be found in Dr. Beecher's reply to Dr. Porter, already referred to. Dr. P. had charged him with "exalting human agency, so as virtually to lose sight of human dependence." Dr. B. justified himself by stating that "the doctrine of dependence had been reiterated and overstated till it had produced, extensively in the community, the results of

nians. While he concedes the doctrine of exercises preliminary and conducive to regeneration, he also asserts, in plain terms, the doctrine which is falsely charged on Arminianism, namely, that *impenitent* exercises are to be performed as conducive to regeneration. He contends for "effort preliminary to the very *act of duty* itself,"—of course the effort cannot be an act of *duty*, and must therefore be one not required by the law of God. He also contends for "a series of acts and exercises" of which "repentance is not the immediate sequent," but "which will result in repentance." Of course, these acts, preceding repentance, must be impenitent. Here, then, is the very doctrine of which he says, on page 171, "To state it, is sufficient censure. Men directed to do what is admitted to be sin, in order to their coming to repentance and securing the divine favour!" As his theory identifies repentance and regeneration, he is compelled to forbid all preparatory exercises, or to require impenitent ones. Sometimes he does the one, and sometimes the other. To escape one absurdity he flies to another. As Arminians do not consider repentance and regeneration to be the same, they can enjoin preliminary exercises, and yet require that they shall be strictly penitent.

fatalism with multitudes. If free agency was admitted at all, it was so out of sight, or so dimly seen in the background, that a large portion of the community had ceased to feel the practical influence of the doctrine of accountability, while many were in theory, and more in feeling, fatalists. In this condition, the people did not need heightened Calvinism on the point of dependance: they had been crammed with it, and were dying with excessive aliment, and needed a long and vigorous prescription of free agency to produce an alterative, and render the truth salutary, by administering the proper potions in due season. Nor was there for a long time any danger of overaction on the subject of free agency."—*Harvey on Moral Agency*, p. 205.

Dr. B. administered his "vigorous prescription of free agency," which operated so powerfully that his patients were going over to the other extreme, as is intimated in the following extract: "And before I received your letter, I had felt the propriety of beginning to balance the overactings of free agency, by giving more prominence, and frequency, and power to the doctrine of absolute dependance on the Holy Ghost."—p. 206.

We are no longer at a loss how to account for the impatience which this class of theologians manifest, when required to maintain something like systematic consistency in their preaching. Robert Hall was not alone in this particular. "It makes no small demand on our patience," says Mr. Barnes, "when we see the system-maker remove angle after angle, and apply stroke after stroke, to some great mass of truth which a mighty genius has struck out, but which keen-eyed and jealous orthodoxy will not admit to its proper bearing on the souls of men, until it is located in a creed, and cramped into some frame-work of faith, that has been reared around the Bible. Our sympathy with such men as Butler, and Chalmers,

and Foster, and Hall, is far greater than with Turretine or Ridgely. With less patience still do we listen to those whose only business it is to shape and reduce to a prescribed form; who never look at a passage in the Bible or a fact in nature, without first robbing it of its freshness, by an attempt to give it a sectarian location: who never stumble on an original and unclassified idea, without asking whether the system-maker had left any niche for the late-born intruder; and who applies to it all tests, as to a non-descript substance in chymistry, in order to fasten on it the charge of an affinity with some rejected confession, or some creed of a suspected name."—*Introductory Essay*, p. 16.

All this looks very pretty and plausible at first sight; but let us examine it. What, we ask, is the grand difference between a disciplined, and an undisciplined mind? Is it not that the former refers facts to principles, and principles to systems; while the latter stores away its acquisitions in disorder? Does Mr. B.'s knowledge consist in "facts," and "unclassified ideas," and "great masses of truth," on which he has *stumbled*, or which his "mighty genius has struck out," and for which he can find no "niche" in his philosophical or religious theories? We cannot avoid regarding with suspicion that theological system which furnishes no "niche" for a "great mass of revealed truth;" and we confess that it made "no small demand on our patience" when Mr. B., acting the part of the system-maker, applied stroke after stroke to the doctrine of a general atonement, until it was made to unite with the doctrine that God eternally and unchangeably decreed the salvation of a definite number of the human race, and the damnation of the rest.

It is alarming to reflect on the extent to which New Divinity must have multiplied spurious conversions, and unfounded hopes of salvation. We cannot see how it is

possible for any to be converted by attending to its specific directions. We have shown, not only that many of its teachers forbid prayer, or attending to the means of grace, as conducing to conversion, and insist that the sinner shall perform the work in his own strength, by one single act; but likewise, that this is precisely what the system requires, and that any other directions would be inconsistent with its leading principles. We would not be understood to entertain the opinion that none are truly converted in the churches where it is preached. We doubt not that there are, in those churches, many holy men and women, and many sound conversions. But these persons are not indebted to this system for their conversion, or for their present excellence. There are several ways in which genuine conversions in such churches may be accounted for, without giving the credit to New Divinity. Sometimes individuals are powerfully awakened by the preaching, (for many of its advocates preach the law with great power and effect,) go to their homes, follow the directions of the Bible, and obtain mercy, without knowing what other directions might be given. Many are so deeply awakened, that they follow their own previous impressions and the impulses of the Spirit, praying and agonizing for pardon, and regeneration, and peace, in despite of the intimations that in so doing they are acting the part of rebels, and growing worse and worse. Others, although they suppose that these instructions must be right, and conclude that they are Christians because they have changed their minds, purposed to serve God, or performed some one act which they have been told is submission, dissatisfied with their condition, and determined to enjoy all that they believe to be the privilege of Christians, press on to higher attainments, and thus reach, ultimately, the character which they were previously supposed to possess. Besides, ministers of this faith frequently give

instructions directly opposite to their creed—the very instructions which they at other times condemn. It is astonishing with what readiness and composure they contradict themselves. But how fearful the probability that thousands will conclude that they are Christians, because they have “submitted,” as it is called, by taking one single step,—by doing what, according to Dr. Skinner, they could “begin and complete in the same moment;” and that they will remain in that condition; especially as they are taught that, being once converted, they can never be lost, and that Christian experience is perfectly compatible with being carnal, sold under sin, and committing it every day. It may be truly said with regard to this system, *Wide* is the gate and *broad* is the way that leadeth unto life; and that thousands more do not go in thereat, is owing to the influence of those gospel truths on the public mind, which New Divinity finds so much in its way.

We recognise one of the most pernicious tendencies of this system in the necessity which it imposes, of conforming the evidences of religious experience, and the standard of religious enjoyment, to its false views of regeneration. It is not to be supposed that those whose efforts to become Christians have gone no further than the performance of one single mental act, can have the Spirit of God bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, and also the consequent peace and joy. They must, in the earlier stages of their profession, derive all their evidence that they are Christians from the consciousness merely of their having performed that one act, which they are told is sufficient to make them such. If this inference is not sufficient to make them happy, they must be instructed that such feelings are not usually attendant on conversion. It will be the more necessary to guard them on this point, if they are surrounded by Methodist converts, and have opportunities of contrasting

their experience with the experience of those who are rejoicing in God. Hence sermons have been preached, and tracts written, in which the great object has been to show that regeneration is perfectly consistent with the absence of those feelings of enjoyment. The desire for those emotions is stigmatized as a selfish desire for happiness. Attempts are made to cast suspicion on the experience of those whose conversion is succeeded by great joy.

The effect of this must be to strengthen the hands of infidelity. Let one who has entertained doubts of the truth of Christianity be awakened by the Spirit, after having listened for years to animated and eloquent representations of the *power* as distinguished from the *form* of religion—after having been accustomed to hear the disquietude of the unconverted, contrasted with the “great peace” of those who are born of God; let him be told that submission is one indivisible act, which he can perform this moment; and when he has performed what he supposes is the act required, and finds himself counted among Christians, and looks in vain for the happiness which he has heard so gloriously described, and is told that men may be converted and experience no change in their feelings, and finds a disposition to class those feelings with delusion—what will be the probable effect? He will relapse into his former skepticism. He will say, I have been of the opinion that all the enjoyment about which Christians have made so much ado, was nothing more than the feeling induced by the supposition, whether true or false, that they were in the favour of God, that an infidel is quite as happy when he imagines himself safe, and I am now confirmed in this opinion.

Indeed, this system runs into infidelity at several points. We have an example of this tendency of the doctrine of natural ability, in a passage in the essay of Dr. Skinner,

to which reference has just been made. He writes, " Besides, what, according to Scripture, is the primary ground of man's condemnation? Not his having refused the proffered power of the Spirit, but his not having used his faculties aright. Thus the heathen are declared to be inexcusable; not because they have rejected the Spirit, but because they are rational beings, and creation shows to them the perfections of its Author. They are men; God's glory is spread out before them, over his works; *therefore*, they are without excuse for not knowing and loving God. The conclusion follows, from the premises mentioned; no other premise is required to justify it. The heathen, depraved as they are, are condemned on this sole account."

It is here plainly asserted that the heathen have every thing that is necessary to their "knowing and loving God" in their own faculties, and the works of creation. The inference is irresistible, that neither revelation nor spiritual influence is necessary; the very thing for which skeptics contend. And we are told, with perfect consistency, that the heathen are condemned, not because they have rejected the Spirit, but solely on account of their not having availed themselves of the light of nature and the power which they possessed naturally. Had these sentiments been published from Tammany Hall, they would have shocked the feelings of the religious portion of the community; but coming from the eloquent and popular pastor of the Mercer-street Presbyterian Church, they are to be received as the pure gospel. This, however, is a consistent exhibition of the doctrine of natural ability.

There will also be found a perfect agreement between Deism and New Divinity, on the nature of depravity, holiness, and regeneration. Deists do not hesitate to attribute depravity to man. Grant, then, that it does not adhere to the constitution as a source of depraved action;

that it is not hereditary ; that it consists solely in voluntary action, and they will not object. Grant them that regeneration is nothing more than a change in the voluntary exercises, which man is capable of effecting without supernatural influences ; and that holiness is nothing more than such right voluntary action as man is naturally able to perform, and there will be a perfect agreement. They may entertain no partiality for the technicalities by which these doctrines are represented, but on the doctrines themselves there will be no dispute. In fact, New Divinity, so far as religious experience is concerned, is nothing more than the religion of nature, associated with gospel motives.

This system encourages the sinner in the postponement of repentance. He possesses the ability naturally, and independently of the Holy Spirit—an ability which no depravity can impair, to do all that is necessary to his salvation at any moment, inasmuch as it consists in “one indivisible act of the mind.” The only danger that can attend postponement, according to this theory, arises from the possibility of dying so suddenly that there is not time for a single volition.

And while this system on the one hand encourages awful presumption, on the other it overwhelms with despair. If the sinner is not deeply convicted, he is in danger of being led by it to suppose himself a Christian, without ever having experienced godly sorrow for sin, or without having called on God, in earnest prayer, for pardon ; merely because he has made up his mind to be a Christian, or performed some act which the sinner may begin and complete in one moment. While those who are fully awakened, and can be satisfied with nothing short of genuine evidence of their acceptance with God, as the ground of the conclusion that they are Christians, are forbidden to use the only means of obtaining that assurance,

and are in some instances driven to madness. They are told that they are wholly impenitent; that if they were penitent they would be Christians; that their deep distress is nothing more than sorrow for the consequences of their sins; it is mere selfishness; they are afraid of hell; it makes them worse instead of better; they are not to pray, for the prayers of the wicked are an abomination; they can give their hearts to God, and be Christians in a moment, if they will. The poor sinner makes an effort, but it produces no perceptible change. He supposes that conversion will bring peace of mind, but there remains nothing, as yet, but a sense of condemnation. He cannot be induced to imagine that any one act which he has performed is regeneration, and to "indulge a hope;" and he is thus driven to despair, unless he receive other instructions.

Let it not be supposed that we judge of the moral and religious character of the advocates of this theory, and the members of their churches, by its logical and practical tendencies. It is so operated upon and neutralized, by other and purer systems, that it has not had the opportunity of exhibiting its legitimate effects on society. Besides opposition from other quarters, it finds in Methodism an almost omnipresent foe. But if it were to succeed in putting down all opposition, and securing the field to itself, it would bring on the millennium of infidelity.

THE END.

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